

DOUGLASS'S DECLARATIONS OF  
INDEPENDENCE AND PRACTICES OF POLITICS

Hereditary bondsmen! Know ye not  
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?

George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

Frederick Douglass one day hits back, he fights the slave-breaker with all his force, and the slave-breaker does not hit back; he stands trembling; he calls other slaves to help, and they refuse. The abstract philosophical concept of a freedom which can never be taken away suddenly comes to life and reveals its very concrete truth: freedom is not only the goal of liberation, it *begins* with liberation; it is there to be "practiced." This, I confess, I learned from you.

Herbert Marcuse to Angela Davis

During the nineteenth century, African American political theorists time and again found reason to cite the lines appearing as the first epigraph to this chapter. Henry Highland Garnet invoked them in his incendiary "Address to the Slaves of the United States" (1843), as did Martin R. Delany in his political novel, *Blake; or, The Huts of America* (1861–1862). Frederick Douglass quoted them thrice: first in his short story "The Heroic Slave" (1853), and then again in two autobiographies, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881, 1892).<sup>1</sup> When, then, Du Bois adduced these lines as one of the epigraphs to "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," the third chapter of *Souls*, he was re-citing a text with a notable history in black political thought. Significantly, Du Bois's re-citation of Byron's militant exhortation prefaces and pairs it with a second epigraph drawn from the same poem: "From birth till death enslaved; in word, in deed,

unmanned."<sup>2</sup> The two epigraphs present a stark choice: emasculating submission to slavery or insurrection. By counterposing the two options, Du Bois prefigures the chapter that follows, anticipating his critique of Washington's politics of unmanly submission and his expression of enthusiasm for the spirit that would "strike the blow."<sup>3</sup>

For Du Bois, Frederick Douglass was the preeminent representative of that spirit (the third chapter of *Souls* mentions neither Delany nor Garnet). Reserving his highest praise for Douglass's political leadership, Du Bois writes that

after the war and emancipation, the great form of Frederick Douglass, the greatest of American Negro leaders, still led the host. Self assertion, especially in political lines, was the main programme . . . Douglass, in his old age, still bravely stood for the ideals of his early manhood,—ultimate assimilation *through* self assertion, and on no other terms.<sup>4</sup>

The sentences quoted here include the only explicit references to Douglass in a chapter otherwise devoted to Booker T. Washington. And yet the spirit of Douglass, as Du Bois construes it, persistently haunts that chapter, so much so that we would be no less justified in reading it as an elegiac response to Douglass's passing than we have been in treating it as a forceful attack on the Wizard of Tuskegee. Du Bois, we know, wrote a series of elegies after hearing of Douglass's death. Chapter 3 of *Souls*, I am suggesting, was an addition to that series.

Three considerations argue for interpreting chapter 3 as a prose poem of lamentation. One pertains to the chapter's third epigraph (the first and second epigraphs having been provided by Byron), which comprises two lines of music drawn from the slave song "A Great Camp-meetin' in de Promised Land."<sup>5</sup> Specifically, this epigraph exhibits six and a half measures of treble clef music that "A Great Camp-meetin'" introduces to sound the theme of grief expressed in its first stanza choral lyrics—"Gwine to mourn an' nebber tire / Mourn an' nebber tire / Mourn an' nebber tire,"<sup>6</sup>—and that Du Bois has now introduced, arguably, to resound the same theme. The second consideration is that the chapter's first paragraph ties the "ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington" to "the passing" of "war memories and ideals," thus suggesting that its mournful musical epigraph be heard as the death knell for the Civil War's grip

on the American Negro's historical consciousness post-Reconstruction ("since 1876"), a finality that may well have been necessary for Washington's "leading" to begin.<sup>7</sup>

Chapter 3 also ties Washington's ascendancy to the passing of Frederick Douglass, for it precisely if tacitly relates that ascendancy to Douglass's demise in its final paragraph:

The black men of American have a duty to perform, a duty stern and delicate,—a forward movement to oppose a part of the work of their greatest leader. So far as Mr. Washington preaches Thrift, Patience, and Industrial Training for the masses, we must hold up his hands and strive with him, rejoicing in his honors and glorying in the strength of this Joshua called of God and of man to lead the headless host. But so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustice, North or South, does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds,—so far as he, the South, or the Nation, does this,—we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them. By every civilized and peaceful method we must strive for the rights which the world accords to men, clinging unwaveringly to those great words which the sons of the Fathers would fain forget: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>8</sup>

A third reason, then, to read chapter 3 as prose elegy is Du Bois's subtle, analogical application of the story of Exodus to African American history and, specifically, to describe Washington's emergence as a political leader.<sup>9</sup> Du Bois introduces the Exodus analogy in chapter 1 ("Of Our Spiritual Strivings"), when he writes that forty years after emancipation "the Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land."<sup>10</sup> Twice more he draws on the figure of Canaan in chapter 1 and then extends the analogy in the next chapter ("Of the Dawn of Freedom") with a reference to the King's Highway, a road along which the Israelites sought to travel on their way to the Promised Land.<sup>11</sup> In chapter 3, the portrait of Washington as a "Joshua called . . . to lead the headless host" yet again invokes the Exo-

odus tale and recalls the earlier allusion to Douglass, "the greatest of American Negro leaders, [who] still led the host" after the war and emancipation. Imagining Washington as Joshua, Du Bois suggests that Douglass was the black Moses who previously led the host and whose demise left the host headless. Having led his people out of the Egypt of American slavery, Douglass, like Moses, died without leading them into the Promised Land (for Du Bois, the promised land of assimilation). Called to succeed Douglass, Washington, like Joshua, takes the place of his people's greatest leader (and, with Douglass gone, is now himself "their greatest leader"), although his critics, Du Bois says, do not expect that in the manner of Joshua fighting the battle of Jericho he will cause "the bias and prejudices of years [to] disappear at the blast of a trumpet."<sup>12</sup> Du Bois discerns virtue in Washington's politics, but opposes it where it departs from the politics of self-assertion that he sees as Douglass's legacy. When Du Bois complains that Washington apologizes for injustice, does not rightly value the privilege of voting, and so forth, he laments that Douglass is dead and that Washington has failed to preserve his spirit. Du Bois now mourns, but he "nebber tires," for when he forcefully insists that "the black men of America" cling to the words of the Declaration of Independence—"which the sons of the Fathers would fain forget"—he echoes Douglass's famous July 5, 1852, exhortation to the sons of the Fathers to "*Cling to this day* [July 4] . . . and to its principles."<sup>13</sup> Depicting himself as Douglass's remindful son and rightful heir, Du Bois plays the trump of the counter-sublime, thereby prefiguring his portrait of Alexander Crummell: aligning himself with the "the great form" of Douglass, he suggests that Washington's politics, whatever its virtues, is but a diminished version of the politics that he following Douglass embraces.

In the Introduction, I suggested several reasons for bringing Douglass's *Bondage* into conversation with Du Bois's *Souls*. One was to complicate our understanding of the history of African American political thought by interrogating Du Bois's reliance on Douglass's authority to promote his critique of Washington. When Du Bois affiliates himself with Douglass, he elides elements of Douglass's treatment of black politics that set it apart from the politics of expressive self-realization. For example, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" lumps all opponents to separatism under the rubric of "assimilationism" and represents Du Bois

and Douglass alike as assimilationists. Yet *Bondage*, and in fact the July 5 speech, present a Douglass who, if not a separatist, is certainly not an assimilationist in Du Bois's sense. *Bondage* evinces a Douglass whom I interpret as a radical reconstructionist *avant la lettre*: as a political theorist who thinks the possibility of refounding the Union on the basis of a reconstituted practice of citizenship. In the present chapter, then, I examine some underappreciated features of this Douglass's political thought, which differs in more than one way from the politics of expressive self-realization.

Another reason for bringing *Bondage* into conversation with *Souls*, I suggested, was to provide a critical perspective on the key claims supporting Du Bois's defense of a politics of expressive self-realization—a politics that is rule- and ruler-centered, expressivist, and predicated on an anomaly theory of white supremacy. In sharp contrast to *Souls*, *Bondage* sketches a picture of black politics that rejects the ruler model of leadership (which, ironically, Du Bois applies to Douglass when he figures him as a black Moses); is not expressivist; and regards white supremacy as a nonanomalous form of domination. By here elucidating that picture, I establish terms for putting into question Du Bois's key claims. (In the chapter that follows, I rely on and extend those terms to reconstruct and evaluate recent and contemporary debates about black politics in post-segregation America.)

While I focus here on *Bondage*, I do not claim that Douglass's second autobiography represents the substance of his thought as a whole, or that it captures his "basic philosophy" as it evolves over the course of his long and complicated intellectual career.<sup>14</sup> *Bondage* is a unique contribution to Douglass's oeuvre. Comparing it with the other autobiographies, I agree with those scholars who have contrasted it to the 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and would only add that it is equally easy to contrast it to the later *Life and Times*. Douglass's second autobiography exhibits a communitarian sensibility largely missing from the *Narrative*, while his third telling of his life's story—particularly in parts not already appearing in *Bondage*—through its emphases on the self-made man and economic self-help, recoups the *Narrative*'s individualism and suggests a stronger kinship with Booker T. Washington than is evident either in *Bondage* or in Du Bois's representation of Douglass in *Souls*.<sup>15</sup> And here, too, we should note that *Life and Times*, while it incorporates most of

*Bondage*, likewise excises the book's preface and its appendix—including, for example, "The Nature of Slavery" and two excerpts from "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"—which give *Bondage*'s readers reason to read it as a political theory of bondage and freedom and not simply as autobiography.<sup>16</sup> In a related vein, *Bondage* may also be compared to Douglass's nonautobiographical speeches and writings, and with a similar result: despite the continuities that tempt us to seek out the overriding unity in Douglass's speech and writings, we notice that more than one mind, more than one voice, animate his intellectual career. For my purposes, then, *Bondage* is significant, not because it illumines the ultimate integrity of Douglass's thought over the course of his lifetime, but because it uncovers often forgotten or unheeded conceptual possibilities for theorizing, with critical reference to Du Bois, the prospects for black politics in the post-segregation era.

It may be argued that Du Bois himself is a better resource than Douglass for thinking through these options. Or, to put the point somewhat differently, that Du Bois no more than Douglass was of one mind, and that the later Marxist, Freudian Du Bois, can help to illuminate the limitations of the early Du Bois's thought better than Douglass. It is true that Du Bois's intellectual development is complex and differentiated. But with regard to two of the three questions in light of which I have been interrogating his early political theory, the "mature" Du Bois fails unambiguously to distinguish himself from the author of *Souls*. To be specific, Du Bois maintains his adherence to a rule-centered notion of political leadership well beyond the publication of *Souls*—in *Dark Princess* (1928) and *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), for example—and still relies on that notion during the last decade of his life.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the political expressivist idea that effective and authoritative black politics must express a shared black spiritual identity continues to haunt both *Black Reconstruction* (1935), with its invocations of African folklore and slave music, and *Dusk of Dawn*, with its attempt to identify New World substitutes for African communalism.<sup>18</sup> Now it is true, arguably, that with his turn to Marxism Du Bois rejected anomaly theories of white supremacy.<sup>19</sup> But noting this difference between Du Bois's early and more mature thought is not enough to justify the claim that reading *Souls*, say, from the perspective of *Dusk of Dawn*, or of some other mature work or works, will prove more instructive than reading it from the perspective of

*Bondage*. My argument, in any case, is that the latter strategy is likely to be the more instructive—at least as regards claims critical to Du Bois's defense of the politics of self-realization (as we have seen, claims relating to the nature of politics and political leadership; the importance of political expressivism; and the nature of white supremacy)—for *Bondage* marks a sharper break with those propositions than do any of Du Bois's post-*Souls* political theoretical writings.

*Bondage* highlights and elaborates two examples of black politics: a plantation politics enacted by enslaved, southern blacks, and an extra-plantation politics enacted by free, northern blacks. In Douglass's narrative, declarations of independence pave the way for both politics. Before pledging himself to a plantation politics of subversive plotting, Douglass declares his independence from the system of slavery. Before dedicating himself to an extra-plantation politics of print journalism, he declares his independence from the Garrisonian abolitionists. In each case Douglass's political action presupposes a declaration of freedom. Figuring black politics in terms of the deeds of the Republic's founding fathers, Douglass depicts himself as, in the words of James McCune Smith's introduction to *Bondage*, a "Representative American Man"—not as a synecdoche for what the nation has become and is, but, in keeping with Emerson's notion of a representative man, as an *exemplar of the possibility of re-founding and re-constructing the nation*.<sup>20</sup>

### The True Nature of Slavery

In his introduction to *The Making of New World Slavery*, Robin Blackburn remarks that though New World "slave systems displayed something of the impersonality and functional logic of modern organization . . . the slave plantations themselves were based on the distinctive face-to-face relationship between overseer, driver and slave crew."<sup>21</sup> Like most other slave narratives, *Bondage* analyzes plantation-based, personal relationships, yet not without examining the "functional logic" of the slave plantation system. In fact, an important purpose of Douglass's book is to show just how personal relationships effectively serve the aims of that system. According to Douglass, the plantation regime is a form of domination the telos and function of which are "to reduce man to a level with the brute."<sup>22</sup> Douglass declares his independence from this regime, I shall argue, by fighting to enforce a limit to domination.

In a chapter entitled "A General Survey of the Slave Plantation," Douglass describes the plantation on which he lived as a boy:

That plantation is a little nation of its own . . . The laws and the institutions of the state, apparently touch it nowhere. The troubles arising here, are not settled by the civil power of the state. The overseer is generally accuser, judge, jury, advocate and executioner. The criminal is always dumb. The overseer attends to all sides of a case.<sup>23</sup>

Douglass's main point here, which he repeats throughout *Bondage*, is that to be a slave is to be subject to the unconstrained will of another human being. That human being is either the slave's master or the master's proxy—his overseer. Although a slave may find that he is directly subject to his master's will, he typically confronts that will in the person of his overseer, who "stand[s] between the slave and all civil constitutions—[the overseer's] . . . word is law, and is implicitly obeyed."<sup>24</sup> According to Douglass, the overseer, in his capacity as overseer, need not answer for his actions to a constitution or to any other body of law (his word "is law"). Neither need he take into account the slave's opinions, because the slave, for all the overseer's intents and purposes, may as well be "dumb." In the rare case where the overseer's treatment of a slave appears to contravene the will of the master, the master tends ultimately to sanction the behavior of the overseer.<sup>25</sup> Analyzing the slaveholder's maxim "that it is better that a dozen slaves suffer, under the lash, without fault, than that the master or the overseer should *seem* to have been wrong in the presence of the slaves," Douglass remarks that "*Everything must be absolute here*."<sup>26</sup> He makes a similar point when he recounts Colonel Lloyd's treatment of Old Barney:

Listening to complaints, however groundless, Barney must stand, hat in hand, lips sealed, never answering a word. He must make no reply, no explanation; the judgment of the master must be deemed infallible, for his power is absolute and irresponsible. In a free state, a master, thus complaining without cause, of his ostler, might be told—"Sir, I am sorry I cannot please you, but, since I have done the best I can, your remedy is to dismiss me." Here, however, the ostler must stand, and listen and tremble. One of the most

heart-saddening and humiliating scenes I ever witnessed, was the whipping of Old Barney.<sup>27</sup>

To the extent that the plantation nation places no restriction on a master's will as it applies to his slaves, it treats a master's power as unconditional, or absolute. The plantation has its "own rules and regulations," says Douglass, but there exist no rules or regulations to which a slave can appeal as a basis for demanding that his master show restraint in his conduct (for example, for demanding that her master forgo cruel and humiliating disciplinary "remedies"). For Douglass, the master is "ir-responsible," for he is not liable to account for his treatment of his slaves to a higher, public authority—as in fact he would be under the legal jurisdiction of a "free state."<sup>28</sup> Without recourse to some such authority, which could censure and constrain his master's will, a slave is everywhere and always vulnerable to his master's ability arbitrarily to interfere in his affairs. Douglass underlines the slave's vulnerability in this regard when he reports that "a slave-woman is at the mercy of the power, caprice, and passion of her owner."<sup>29</sup> He further explains that vulnerability when he asserts that the slave system requires that "there . . . be no force between the slave and the slave-holder, to restrain the power of the one, and protect the weakness of the other."<sup>30</sup>

I can summarize my analysis thus far of Douglass's account of the nature of slavery by saying that he conceptualizes the relationship of master to slave as, fundamentally, a form of domination. Following Philip Pettit's recent reconstruction of the republican tradition of political thought, we may say that one agent dominates another if, and only if, he possesses the power (the capacity) to interfere with that other on an arbitrary basis.<sup>31</sup> A person possesses that power when, through coercive or manipulative actions, he is able to worsen another person's choice situation (for example, if he can change her range of options, alter the expected payoffs to those options, or assume control over which outcomes will result from which options) at will, or, more generally, without having to take account of the interests or opinions (pertaining, for example, to what her interests require) of that other person.<sup>32</sup> For Pettit, one person can dominate another even when she is not actually interfering with him, because she still enjoys the power to interfere arbitrarily in his choices. With respect to those choices, then, the victim of domination lives at her

mercy. It should be noted, finally, that Pettit, like republican political theorists before him, represents the relation of master to slave as a paradigmatic example of domination.

For Douglass, domination is a constitutive feature of plantation slavery, for the "plantation state," unlike the "free state," never compels slave masters to obey a constitutional, legal, or other public authority—let alone consider their "always dumb" slaves' interests or opinions—when deciding how to behave toward their slaves. As Douglass puts the point in one of the appendices to *Bondage* (called "The Nature of Slavery"), slavery subjects persons to "the arbitrary and despotic control of a frail, depraved, and sinful fellow-man."<sup>33</sup> The master dominates his slaves, for he is permitted to treat his slaves at his pleasure. The master's impulse, his whim, reigns, because his treatment of his slaves suffers no limits.

[Capt. Anthony] was not by nature worse than other men. Had he been brought up in a free state, surrounded by the just restraints of free society—restraints which are necessary to the freedom of all its members, alike and equally—Capt. Anthony might have been a humane man . . . The slaveholder, as well as the slave, is the victim of the slave system. A man's character greatly takes its hue from the form and color of things around him. Under the whole heavens there is no relation more unfavorable to the development of honorable character, than that sustained by the slaveholder to the slave. Reason is imprisoned here, and the passions run wild . . . Capt. Anthony could be kind, and, at times, he even showed an affectionate disposition . . . But the pleasant moods of a slave-holder are remarkably brittle; they are easily snapped; they neither come often, nor remain long. His temper is subjected to perpetual trials; but, since these trials are never borne patiently, they add nothing to his natural stock of patience.<sup>34</sup>

A master's domination of his slaves, because it entails the power to interfere arbitrarily in his slaves' choices, provokes him to behave capriciously. Without "the just restraints of free society"—that is, without enforceable laws that secure the freedom of each member of society against the domination of others—human beings will indulge their passions and arbitrarily interfere in one another's choices for lack of compelling legal

grounds not to do so. The absence of just restraints effectively bars reason from adducing such grounds (it "imprisons" reason) and, in a slave society, invites masters to exercise their dominion (their power of arbitrary interference) as their whims dictate.<sup>35</sup>

As indicated earlier, Douglass maintains that the *telos* and function of the plantation regime, or, as I may now put it, of masters' and overseers' domination of slaves, are to reduce men to the level of brutes. The plantation regime fulfills this function largely by two means: first, by disrupting slaves' social bonds, and second, by physically abusing individual slaves.<sup>36</sup> Domination is a feature of both tactics, because the application of the power of arbitrary interference both breaks up social attachments and breaks individuals—physically and spiritually.

The disruption of social bonds is most keenly felt as an assault on the slave's feelings of family connectedness. Indeed, "the practice of separating children from their mothers, and hiring the latter out . . . is a successful method of obliterating from the mind and heart of the slave, all just ideas of the sacredness of *the family*."<sup>37</sup> In Douglass's view, slavery's violation of the mother-child relationship is but one feature of its general tendency to ignore slaves' kinship ties, a tendency he highlights when he claims that "slave law and practice" abolish the category of "father" and that the laws of slavery recognize neither fathers nor families "in the social arrangements of the plantation."<sup>38</sup> In the perspective of slave law, no normative significance attaches to the terms "mother," "father," "sister," and "brother." Biological parenthood, fraternity, and sorority exist among slaves, but the law no more treats these relations as a basis for attributing claims and obligations to slaves (inheritance rights, filial duties, and so forth) than it treats the same biological relations as a basis for attributing claims and obligations to cattle. For example, slave law omits to assign to slave mothers and fathers custodial rights pertaining to the interests of their children—rights the enforcement of which would constrain the power of slave masters arbitrarily to interfere in slave children's lives—and to that extent sanctions and supports the practice of separating children from their mothers. That practice helps to obliterate the idea that the family is a sacred institution, for it brutally concretizes the law's blindness to the slave's familial relationships.

In describing the consequences of the plantation regime's failure to acknowledge slave kinship, Douglass captures the substance of what

Orlando Patterson terms "natal alienation," a condition defined by the slave's estrangement "from all formal, legally enforceable ties of 'blood,' and from any attachment to groups or localities other than those chosen for him by the master . . . The slave was the ultimate human tool . . . as disposable as the master wished."<sup>39</sup> In essence, natal alienation is the exclusion of slave kinship from the sphere of legally protected kinship relations and the consequent subjection of slaves to the domination of masters. Oblivious to the slave's blood ties, slave law abandons the slave to her master's power of arbitrary interference and, specifically, as Douglass realizes when he recalls the first time he saw his siblings, to her master's power to transfer her from one plantation to another: "We were brothers and sisters, but what of that? Why should they be attached to me, or I to them? Brothers and sisters we were by blood; but *slavery* had made us strangers."<sup>40</sup> Observing that domination typically results in the disruption of the slave's social bonds (her attachment to groups other than those chosen by her master) and that slave law, by neglecting those bonds, facilitates and promotes that disruption, Douglass recognizes that natal alienation, *avant la lettre*, is a constituent element of slavery.

In a passage that recounts his travails from the time he first departed Maryland's eastern shore to his sojourn to the home of Edward Covey, "the Negro Breaker," Douglass suggests that the natively alienating disruption of his social attachments has been the unifying theme of his life:

Escape was impossible; so, heavy and sad, I paced the seven miles, which separated Covey's house from St. Michael's—thinking much by the solitary way—averse to my condition; but *thinking* was all I could do. Like a fish in a net, allowed to play for a time, I was now drawn rapidly to the shore, secured at all points. "I am," thought I, "but the sport of a power which makes no account, either of my welfare or of my happiness. By a law which I can clearly comprehend, but cannot evade nor resist, I am ruthlessly snatched from the hearth of a fond grandmother, and hurried away to the home of a mysterious 'old master;' again I am removed from there, to a master in Baltimore; thence am I snatched away to the Eastern Shore, to be valued with the beasts of the field and, with them, divided and set apart for a possessor; then am I sent back to Baltimore; and by the time I have formed new attachments and have

begun to hope that no more rude shocks shall touch me, a difference arises between brothers, and I am again broken up, and sent to St. Michaels; and now, from the latter place, I am footing my way to the home of a new master, where, I am given to understand, that, like a wild young working animal, I am to be broken to the yoke of a bitter and life-long bondage.<sup>41</sup>

Snatched, removed, snatched again, set apart, sent back, and broken up, Douglass repeatedly relies on the passive voice to depict himself as the dupe of a fate he describes as "a law." A figure, perhaps, for the whole body of slave law, that law promotes the domination of the slave, for it ignores his family and community attachments (Douglass alludes to his ties to his grandmother, and likewise to his "new attachments"), thereby letting him fall victim to his master's capacity to destroy those attachments through arbitrary interventions that treat his life as if it were naught but "sport," and that need not attend to his "welfare" or his "happiness." Domination leads to the treatment of human beings as animals, Douglass suggests, for the master's exertion of his power of arbitrary interference snatches the slave from one place to another, sunders his connections to kith and kin, and leaves him a "divided" and "broken up" fragment of the family and the community to which he once belonged, as if membership in a family or a community were no more meaningful to him than to "beasts of the field."<sup>42</sup>

The plantation regime reduces men to a level with brutes because slave law subjects slaves' human relationships to slave masters' domination; and because the domination of slaves by masters gives rise to the regular (as if fated by a law) destruction of slaves' social attachments, and thus to the treatment of slaves as if they were animals. In fine, the plantation regime serves its function through the practice of arbitrarily disrupting slaves' social bonds. But this is not the sole means with which it serves that function. A second means, again, is the physical abuse of individual slaves.<sup>43</sup> Douglass alludes to this means when he reports that, having been "broken up," he is headed to be "broken to the yoke of a bitter and life-long bondage." Covey's task, he implies, is to finish the task of breaking him—that is, of subduing him, just as he would subdue "a wild young working animal." Treating Douglass as an ornery brute, Covey will transform him into a compliant one.

Despite his natal alienation, Douglass retains an element of his humanity as he walks to Covey's home. That element, specifically, is thinking. Having fallen prey to a fate that secures him like a fish "at all points," Douglass demonstrates his capacity to act: thinking, he proclaims, was all he could do. Like Descartes, Douglass thinks and iterates "I am" (as well as "am I"), not to establish with certainty that he exists, but to express his aversion to the condition of his existence, a condition that is comparable to that of a trapped animal—a netted fish—and that therefore negates his humanity. By aversively thinking "I am," Douglass asserts and preserves his humanity despite a fate that would deny it.

Yet even aversive thinking gives out when confronted with "Covey, the Negro breaker."<sup>44</sup> This, indeed, is the most important consequence of Covey's brutal and relentless tyranny. When all is said and done, Covey's domination of Douglass, as Douglass depicts it, destroys Douglass's aversive thinking and completes the process of humbling, degrading, and breaking him:

Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed; my intellect languished; the disposition to read departed; the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!<sup>45</sup>

Covey exercises his power arbitrarily to interfere in Douglass's life through grueling work demands and "brutal chastisements"—including weekly floggings.<sup>46</sup> By physically abusing Douglass, he obliterates his thrall's mental engagement with the world around him. When Douglass is not working, or otherwise submitting to Covey's command, he spends his time in a "beastlike stupor."<sup>47</sup> Physically and mentally subdued, he ceases to think aversively and becomes a perfect instance of the *telos* of slavery—man formed in the image of a stupid brute.

Douglass explains the true nature of slavery by showing how the plantation regime uses personal, face-to-face relationships—between masters and slaves and between overseers and slaves—to achieve its ultimate end. Because domination defines these relationships, and because masters and overseers repeatedly and relentlessly exert their power arbitrarily to disrupt slaves' social bonds and to beat them senseless, the plantation regime approximates the goal of reducing slaves to a level

with the brute. But does it ever fully realize that goal? Perhaps not, and Douglass possibly exaggerates when he proclaims that he himself was literally reduced to a "beastlike stupor." Douglass's rhetorical performance of his degradation serves both aesthetic and moral ends. But it also serves a political theoretical end, in that it illustrates vividly and so helps to explain the workings of the plantation regime. With his first declaration of independence Douglass rebels against that regime, picking Covey as his target. With his plantation politics he continues his defiance through a practice of politics that forges new social bonds and that threatens to upset the reproduction of domination.

#### First Declaration of Independence: The Fight with Covey

In *Bondage*, Douglass depicts his fight with Covey as a drama with three scenes. He marks the transitions between these scenes by remarking that "now the scene was changed" and "the scene here, had something comic about it."<sup>48</sup> In the first scene, Covey attacks Douglass and Douglass defends himself, defeating Covey's attempt to "conquer" him.<sup>49</sup> In the scene that follows, Covey tries to strengthen his hand by enlisting the help of Hughes, his cousin, only to have Douglass severely injure Hughes and then drag Covey across the ground of a dung-covered cow yard. The final scene has Covey looking to a hired slave, Bill, and then to his own slave, Caroline, for assistance, but both refuse to aid him. The scene closes with Covey saying, "now, you scoundrel, go to your work; I would not have whipped you half so much as I have had you not resisted." Reflecting on these remarks, Douglass proclaims that "the fact was, *he had not whipped me at all.*"<sup>50</sup>

Douglass claims that his battle with Covey was the "turning point" of his life as a slave.<sup>51</sup> Having shown how he was "humbled, degraded . . . and brutalized," he now describes "the *converse* of all this, and how it was brought about."<sup>52</sup> Peppering his narrative with Christian religious allusions (to Satan, when he depicts Covey as snakelike, to the persecuted Christ, when he describes himself as scarred by "briers and thorns," and so on), Douglass relies on a traditional conversion narrative to establish the context of his transformation. It can be shown, however, that he deploys this narrative precisely to undermine its authority. Thus, in the view of one critic, Douglass secularizes the conversion narrative, "turn-

ing it from 'God's plot' into just one among many ways of structuring a narrative."<sup>53</sup> But Douglass also politicizes the traditional conversion narrative by representing his conversion-through-fighting as a "declaration of independence." Fighting with Covey transforms Douglass—"I was a changed being after that fight," he tells us—yielding a man where there was none ("I was *nothing* before; I WAS A MAN NOW") and a revival of "crushed self-respect and . . . self-confidence."<sup>54</sup> Fighting has these consequences, Douglass suggests, because it declares and establishes his freedom.

In "Self-Reliance," Emerson proclaims that "the moment [a man] acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries and customs out of the window, we pity him no more but thank and revere him."<sup>55</sup> Commenting on his fight with Covey, Douglass echoes but revises Emerson when he writes that "a man, without force, is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot *honor* a helpless man, although it can *pity* him; and even this it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise."<sup>56</sup> Our tendency to revere a man displaces our tendency to pity him just when he "acts from himself." Self-reliance, then, is antithetical to dependence on laws, books, customs, and the like. In rewriting Emerson, Douglass highlights a form of dependence that Emerson's great essay neglects: to wit, a slave's dependence on his master's power of arbitrary interference. Our tendency to revere or "honor" a slave (perhaps to honor any "man") will displace our tendency to pity him, Douglass implies, only if he embodies a force that resists domination. Where Emerson explains that self-reliance is aversion to conformity (which "loves . . . names and customs"), Douglass depicts it as aversion to domination.<sup>57</sup> Incarnating a force that expresses this aversion, Douglass, through his fight with Covey, achieves a measure of in-dependence, what he also calls "freedom."<sup>58</sup>

Douglass clarifies his notion of freedom in a paragraph that continues to describe the consequences of his fight with Covey:

He only can understand the effect of this combat on my spirit, who has himself incurred something, hazarded something, in repelling the unjust and cruel aggressions of a tyrant. Covey was a tyrant, and a cowardly one withal. After resisting him, I felt as I had never felt before. It was a resurrection from the dark and pestiferous



tomb of slavery, to the heaven of comparative freedom. I was no longer a servile coward, trembling under the frown of a brother worm of the dust, but, my long cowed spirit was roused to an attitude of manly independence. I had reached the point at which I was *not afraid to die*. This spirit made me a free man in *fact*, while I remained a slave in *form*. When a slave cannot be flogged he is more than half free. He has a domain as broad as his own manly heart to defend, and he is really "*a power on earth*." While slaves prefer their lives, with flogging, to instant death, they will always find christians enough, like Covey, to accommodate that preference. From this time, until that of my escape from slavery, I was never fairly whipped. Several attempts were made to whip me, but they were always unsuccessful. Bruises I did get, as I shall hereafter inform my reader; but the case I have been describing, was the end of the brutification to which slavery had subjected me.<sup>59</sup>

In explaining the effects of combat on his spirit, Douglass emphasizes the themes of freedom and independence. Specifically, he mentions "comparative freedom" and "manly independence," noting too that he has become a "free man *in fact*," and "half free." By fighting Covey, Douglass prevents Covey from whipping him. After he fights Covey, he never again is whipped. Although masters and overseers will attempt to whip him, they will fail in their efforts. Combat is the means Douglass deploys to assert his resolve not to be whipped, the tactic he applies to curb Covey's power arbitrarily to interfere in his life. Similarly, it is the means he will deploy to check the arbitrary power of any master to whom he falls prey—the tactic he will use to constrain that power from extending to and including the capacity to whip him.<sup>60</sup> Because the power of arbitrary interference is the substance of domination, curbing that power is tantamount to enforcing a limit to domination. And it is tantamount to imposing a limit on the degree to which an otherwise dominated subject depends on the will of another—on the degree to which his ability to live as he wishes depends on another's decisions. Combat brought Douglass ("manly") in-dependence, because it executed his determination no longer to depend for his well-being on Covey's "merciful" decision not to whip him. His independence was a "comparative" or a "half" freedom, for he remained subject to Covey's mercy in other respects. In

keeping with the republican tradition of political theory, Douglass represents independence as freedom and freedom as nondomination. As he describes the fight with Covey, it secured him a limited freedom by establishing a limit to domination.<sup>61</sup>

Douglass's interpretation of freedom as nondomination is closely connected to his claims that the fight with Covey left him unafraid to die and that his fearlessness toward death made him a free man in fact, even as he remained a slave in form. By battling Covey, Douglass discovers that he is an individual who would rather die than not impose a limit to the domination he suffers at the hands of his masters and overseers. The prospect of death ceases to cow the fighting Douglass—that is, to cause him fear—because he sees that his commitment to resist flogging is so very important to him, so fundamental to his view of himself, that he would welcome death before renouncing the struggle to enforce that commitment. Looking to the future, Douglass knows no fear of death, for he recognizes that sustaining this struggle matters deeply to him, while preserving his life does not.<sup>62</sup>

I turn now to the second claim, which turns on the distinction between fact and form. Douglass helps to clarify this distinction when he writes that "though I was, after my removal from Col. Lloyd's plantation, *in form* the slave of Master Hugh, I was *in fact*, and *in law*, the slave of my old master, Capt. Anthony."<sup>63</sup> Douglass was Master Hugh's slave "in form," I assume, because the *social* form of Master Hugh's relationship to him was that of a master to a slave. Put otherwise, Master Hugh's treatment of Douglass observed the day-to-day social conventions—the social forms—that generally governed a master's treatment of slaves. But Douglass was not Master Hugh's property; he did not belong to Master Hugh "in law." According to the law, Douglass belonged to Capt. Anthony. Due to Capt. Anthony's absence from Douglass's life, however (he remained on Col. Lloyd's plantation when Douglass went to live with Master Hugh), the day-to-day social conventions that normally qualify a master's relationship to his slaves did not qualify his relationship to Douglass. In form, Douglass was not Capt. Anthony's slave. How, then, could he have been his slave "in fact"?

A clue to grasping the distinction between form and fact is the distinction between fact and law. In the present context, law is written language that articulates the rules governing the distribution of property rights.

According to the word of the law, Douglass belonged to Capt. Anthony. Douglass also belonged to Capt Anthony "in fact," for Douglass, with his actions, never challenged Capt. Anthony's legally sanctioned power arbitrarily to interfere in Douglass's life. Here, then, I read "in fact" as "in deed," assuming that Douglass's now obsolete use of this expression was no different than Jane Austen's when, just forty years before the publication of *Bondage*, she described a character as "Gracious in fact if not in word."<sup>64</sup> Following the death of Capt. Anthony, Douglass becomes the legal property of Thomas Auld, the master who sends him to Covey. After he fights Covey, Douglass is a free man "in fact," or "in deed," because henceforth he will persist through his deeds to enforce a limit to domination.<sup>65</sup> No matter to whom he subsequently belongs "in law," Douglass will not belong to that person "in fact," for in fact—that is, through his actions—he will relentlessly challenge his legal master's power to interfere in his life. Still a slave in law and in form—his treatment by his master, or his master's proxies, will still generally observe the social conventions for the treatment of slaves—Douglass will nonetheless have secured a limited freedom. His fearlessness toward death will have "made" him a free man, because it will have displaced a fear that otherwise may have led him to abandon his commitment to resist flogging.<sup>66</sup>

"You can shoot me but you can't whip me," said a slave to Rigby Hopkins; and the result was that he was neither whipped nor shot. If the latter had been his fate, it would have been less deplorable than the living and lingering death to which cowardly and slavish souls are subjected."<sup>67</sup> With these remarks, Douglass claims that if a slave is cowed by the fear of death into succumbing to domination, then he submits to a living death that is worse than the death he fears. His insistence that this living death is deplorable prefigures his later contention—quoted earlier—that "a man, without force, is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot *honor* a helpless man." For Douglass, a person who is helpless in the face of domination—who thus succumbs to domination—is a dishonored person, someone whose life everyone with a "human nature," he himself included, will deplore rather than respect. Failing to resist domination, he will lack "the essential dignity of humanity." More exactly, he will not evince the dignity that he must evince to motivate himself and others to accord him the honor (the respect) that, Douglass elsewhere suggests, he deserves.<sup>68</sup>

For Douglass, dignity expresses a slave's struggle to constrain the power of arbitrary interference. It is a display to others of a slave's ability to help himself, his ability to struggle. And dignity is "essential" not because a human being cannot be a human being without it, but because he cannot induce respect without it—either the respect of others or self-respect. In short, he cannot achieve his humanity in the eyes of others or in his own eyes. The essential dignity of humanity is an apparent, manifest dignity that human beings require—that all the members of humanity require—to acknowledge one another as human. By fighting Covey, Douglass evinces the essential dignity of humanity, thus motivating the rebirth of both his self-confidence (his trust in his ability to demonstrate dignity) and his theretofore "crushed self-respect."<sup>69</sup>

Douglass concludes his discussion of the fight with Covey by quoting the lines from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* that I have used as an epigraph for the present chapter. In Byron's poem, these lines begin a stanza that defends the claim that bondsmen must strike the blow that frees them ("By their right arms the conquest must be wrought?"), arguing that if they depend on other groups to strike that blow ("Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye?") they will fall prey to the domination of those groups.<sup>70</sup> In describing his fight with Covey, Douglass follows Byron in highlighting the role that physical force must play in establishing a limited freedom—that is, in securing a limited independence and non-domination. He suggests, moreover, that by establishing his freedom he has declared his independence. In contrast to the founding fathers' written Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, Douglass's declaration takes the form of nonverbal deeds—it is, again, a declaration "in fact," not words.<sup>71</sup> Still, it remains a declaration, for acts of combat are the means through which Douglass makes apparent his limited independence. Douglass perhaps alludes to the founding fathers' declaration—and, specifically, to its claim to "assume among the powers of the earth the separate & equal station to which the laws of nature . . . entitle them"—when he claims that when a slave cannot be flogged "he has a domain as broad as his own manly heart to defend, and he is really a 'power on earth.'"<sup>72</sup> Echoing the words of the founders, who also rebelled against dependence and domination, Douglass suggests here that his rebellion has nullified his ties to the "slave power," thus transforming him into a separate and equal "power on earth" with a territory (a "do-

main") over which he is, as an individual, sovereign. Figuring his action with reference to the founders, Douglass presents his fight with Covey as the beginning of a revolution that aims to reconstitute the American nation.<sup>73</sup> In what follows, we shall see that he presents his plantation politics as a continuation of that revolution.

### Plantation Politics

A week after his service to Covey ends, Douglass proceeds to the home of William Freeland (his new master "in form"), where he finds his situation much improved:

The freedom from bodily torture and unceasing labor, had given my mind an increased sensibility, and imparted to it greater activity . . . "How be it, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." When entombed at Covey's, shrouded in darkness and physical wretchedness, temporal well-being was the grand *desideratum*; but temporal wants supplied, the spirit puts in its claims. Beat and cuff a slave, keep him hungry and spiritless, and he will follow the chain of his master like a dog; but feed and clothe him well . . . and dreams of freedom intrude . . . You may hurl a man so low, beneath the level of his kind, that he loses all just ideas of his natural position; but elevate him a little, and the clear conception of rights rises to life and power, and leads him onward. Thus elevated, a little, at Freeland's, the dreams called into being by that good man, Father Lawson . . . began to visit me.<sup>74</sup>

By exercising his power of domination, Covey nullified Douglass's capacity to think aversively. Due to his declaration of independence and the beneficent treatment he received from Freeland, Douglass tells us, he regained that ability, his mind restored to an "increased sensibility," a "greater activity," former "dreams of freedom," and a "consciousness of rights." Douglass's renewed aversive thinking causally presupposes his declaration of independence, for without that declaration, which enforced a limit to domination, his ongoing subjection to Covey's whip would have kept him in a beastlike stupor. In other words, his physically expressed aversion to domination—his aversive fighting—was a precon-

dition for the revival of his mentally expressed aversion to domination, that is, his aversive thinking. Again, whether or not Douglass rhetorically exaggerates features of the suffering he endured as Covey's thrall, his representation of that suffering, of his subsequent fight with Covey, and of his elevation at Freeland's conveys a plausible political theoretical insight: namely, that when oppressors cause the human beings they dominate extreme physical duress, it will be extraordinarily difficult and perhaps impossible for those human beings to perpetuate a critical, intellectual resistance to the conditions of their oppression. Only after relieving that physical duress will such resistance be possible.

Douglass's plantation politics is linked causally to his declaration of independence, for his plantation politics demands his renewed aversive thinking, which in turn presupposes his declaration of independence. As Douglass describes plantation politics, it is revolutionary politics fueled by rights-conscious thinking that is averse to the condition of slavery. But plantation politics requires more than aversive thinking. As we shall see, it additionally requires aversive speaking and acting.

For Douglass, plantation politics is unruly, aversively thinking African Americans concertedly engaged in nondominated speech and action that is not rule- or ruler centered; not expressivist but still race-conscious; and not aimed at assimilation. In this section I explicate Douglass's picture of plantation politics, focusing first on the theme of nondomination.<sup>75</sup>

### *Nondominated Speech and Action*

In Douglass's narrative, slaves' collective political action is nondominated just to the extent that it is kept secret. When Douglass lived in St. Michaels, Master Thomas and two other white men broke up his efforts to help a "pious" young white man maintain a Sabbath school for slaves and free coloreds.<sup>76</sup> But when Douglass founds a Sabbath school on Mr. Freeland's plantation, no whites know about it. Slaves can subvert the slave regime (it being assumed that schooling in reading and writing is a form of subversion), he suggests, only if whites remain ignorant of slaves' subversive activities. For Douglass, secrecy is critical to "circumventing the tyrants," and while he claims that he hates secrecy, he adds that "where slavery is powerful, and liberty is weak, the latter is driven to concealment or to destruction."<sup>77</sup> On Douglass's account,

slaves deploy secrecy to constrain their masters' capacities to interfere arbitrarily with their collective actions. Because masters cannot intervene in activities about which they remain ignorant, secrecy carves space for liberty—that is, for nondominated action. Whereas the fight with Covey enforced a limit to domination, the secreting of the Sabbath school's subversive activities effectively extends that limit. As we have seen, Douglass follows the republican tradition of political theory in understanding freedom as nondomination. When, then, he portrays insurgent plantation politics as a practice of collective, nondominated action, he conceptualizes that politics as a practice of freedom. Mr. Freeland's plantation is, indeed, free land, yet only "comparatively" free, for unlike the land of a "free state" its freedom is based not on the enforcement of law but on secrecy.

#### *Politics without Rule*

As we have seen, the plantation regime fulfills its function of reducing men to brutes largely by disrupting slaves' social bonds and physically abusing them. When Douglass fights Covey, he defends himself against the physical abuse, and by embracing plantation politics, he offsets the disruption of social bonds. As Douglass pictures it, plantation politics is a practice of freedom that establishes and sustains new social bonds—hence the title of the chapter he uses to introduce his troupe of subversives, "New Relations and Duties." In sharp contrast to the family attachments that Douglass emphasizes when discussing slavery's destruction of social bonds, these new relations result from voluntary consent, not biological descent.<sup>78</sup>

Douglass summarizes his experience of natal alienation when he writes that "there is not, beneath the sky, an enemy of filial affection so destructive as slavery. It had made my brothers and sisters strangers to me; it converted the mother that bore me, into a myth; it shrouded my father in mystery, and left me without an intelligible beginning in the world."<sup>79</sup> By neglecting the ties of biological paternity, fraternity, and sorority, slave law fosters the disruption of social bonds based on biological filiation—that is, on biological or "blood" descent. How, ultimately, does Douglass respond to the profoundly estranging consequences of this disruption? Not by embracing a version of European romanticism's myth that, through a circuitous spiritual journey, it is possible to regain, in a

higher, "sublated" mode, his disrupted and lost ties to kin and home.<sup>80</sup> The *Bildungsreise* of the slave does not end with a redemptive return to the origin from which he departed:

A slave seldom thinks of bettering his condition by being sold, and hence he looks upon separation from his native place, with none of the enthusiasm which animates the bosoms of young freemen, when they contemplate a life in the far west, or in some distant country where they intend to rise to wealth and distinction. Nor can those from whom they separate, give them up with that cheerfulness with which friends and relations yield each other up, when they feel that it is for the good of the departing one that he is removed from his native place. Then, too, there is correspondence, and there is, at least, the hope of reunion, because reunion is *possible*. But, with the slave, all these mitigating circumstances are wanting. There is no improvement in his condition *probable*,—no correspondence *possible*,—no reunion attainable. His going out into the world, is like a living man going into the tomb, who, with open eyes, sees himself buried out of sight and hearing of wife, children, and friends of kindred tie.<sup>81</sup>

Sold and snatched from one place to another, the slave cannot go home again; he cannot reunite with kith and kin, and so he cannot restore the bonds that natal alienation has helped to sever. What, then, can he do to cope with the effects of his estrangement? If the slave renounces the romantic longing for return and reunion, how can he offset the plantation regime's dehumanizing ruination of family ties? With his portrait of his life on Mr. Freeland's plantation, Douglass answers these questions, suggesting, in essence, that the slave's practice of freedom (of nondominated action) can produce satisfying social attachments and potent political solidarities, even if the integrity of family and home cannot be restored.

They were as true as steel, and no band of brothers could have been more loving. There were no mean advantages taken of each other . . . no tattling; no giving each other bad names to Mr. Freeland; and no elevating one at the expense of the other. We never undertook to do anything, of any importance, which was likely to affect each other, without mutual consultation. We were

generally a unit, and moved together. Thoughts and sentiments were exchanged between us, which might well be called very incendiary, by oppressors and tyrants; and perhaps the time has not even now come, when it is safe to unfold all the flying suggestions which arise in the minds of intelligent slaves . . .

The slaveholder, kind or cruel, is a slaveholder still—the every hour violator of the just and inalienable rights of man; and he is, therefore, every hour silently whetting the knife of vengeance for his own throat. He never lisps a syllable in commendation of the fathers of this republic, nor denounces any attempted oppression of himself, without inviting the knife to his own throat, and asserting the rights of rebellion for his own slaves.<sup>82</sup>

Although two of the six slaves belonging to Douglass's group were biological brothers (Henry and John Harris), the group as a whole was not united by biological bonds. Thrown together on Mr. Freeland's plantation, Douglass and his fellows find themselves working the same farmland. Soon, however, they begin to consult one another, and as Douglass suggests in the next chapter, to debate and deliberate the merits of different courses of action. Douglass and his friends act in concert (they move together), cultivate ties of loyalty, and form themselves into a band of subversive activists (a point I shall revisit in relation to Douglass's allusion to the "fathers of the republic"), consenting through their speech, action, and mutual commitments to resist slaveholder tyranny. Together they constitute a band of "brothers," not because they have filiative relationships to the same parent, but because they have affiliative relationships to one another—that is, because each has agreed to adopt as his own a mutually shaped sense of political purpose. "True as steel," and bound together by "hooks of steel" (an expression that Douglass later uses), Douglass and his cabal compensate for the loss of biologically based kinship ties by forging, through their collective action, consent- and affiliation-based political ties.<sup>83</sup>

By invoking the figure of a "band of brothers," Douglass points not only to his action-in-concert and affiliation-based conception of plantation politics, but, likewise, to his rejection of the view, later embraced by Du Bois, that politics is exclusively a practice of rule. Douglass points to his rejection of this view by echoing a phrase—"We few, we happy few,

we band of brothers"—that Shakespeare's King Henry V speaks specifically to set aside the status distinction between ruler and ruled and to endorse a sense of solidarity that is predicated not on obedience to a ruler but on mutual commitment and self-sacrifice.<sup>84</sup> In a similar vein, and in keeping with the spirit of King Henry's remarks, Douglass also asserts that among his affiliates there was "no elevating one at the expense of the other." In contrast to his ruler-centered vision of Garrisonian, abolitionist politics, which he figures as revolving around the directives of a sublime "hero," a "Moses raised up by God, to deliver his modern Israel from Bondage," Douglass portrays plantation politics as an enterprise of equals driven by a shared and discursively expressed concern to free the world of "tyrants and oppressors."<sup>85</sup> Neither Douglass nor any of his collaborators command their cabal, though Douglass, to be sure, is the "instigator"—the leader-as-initiative-taker rather than the leader-as-ruler—who spurs his fellows to meet, to deliberate, and to join him in planning the plot to run away.<sup>86</sup> And neither, finally, do they aspire to govern the actions of other slaves, as if they saw their band as forming an elite, a "talented tenth" that had been "raised up" to direct the uncalled along the path to freedom. The plantation politics that Douglass and his co-conspirators practice is the politics of a few (of six individuals) who pledge themselves to one another, not a politics geared to ruling the many.<sup>87</sup>

#### *Political Race Consciousness without Political Expressivism*

By highlighting the affiliation- and consent-based character of plantation politics, Douglass lets us see that African American politics need not be the expression of an antecedently given, kinship and descent-based identity that the participants have in common. Indeed, he suggests that African American politics is possible where no such identity exists. Douglass similarly implies that African American politics is possible absent the existence of a black, biological, racial identity. If African American political solidarity is a function of concerted speech, action, and mutual commitment, then it does not require the existence of an antecedently given, biologically defined racial identity any more than it requires the existence of an antecedently given, biologically defined, kinship identity. In Douglass's view, politics, not biology, dictates the common purposes and causes that generate and sustain political solidarity. African American

politics, nor African American biology, forges the purposes of African American politics.<sup>88</sup>

Notice that Douglass's refusal to biologize black politics did not require that he repudiate romantic political expressivism. Thus, without pain of contradiction, Douglass could well have rejected a biological conception of African American politics, yet like Du Bois still sought to ground that politics in a spiritual-cultural conception of black racial identity. But Douglass declined to take this turn. To be precise, he declined to endorse the expressivist thesis that, to be effective and legitimate, black politics must avow and embody a racially specific and collectively shared spiritual or cultural orientation that antecedently unites all black Americans. That the Douglass of *Bondage* has no truck with political expressivism, thus understood, is evident in his portrait of Sandy Jenkins, one of his fellow slaves. After Douglass complains of Covey to Master Thomas, he returns to Covey's farm and encounters Sandy along the way. Responding to Douglass's tale of woe, Sandy, "a genuine African," gives him a root (an herb) "possessing all the powers required for . . . [his] protection."<sup>89</sup> A little later in his narrative, Douglass reports that he suspected that Sandy was the member of his band of brothers who betrayed the plot to escape.<sup>90</sup> Douglass's refusal of political expressivism is implicit, I shall argue, in his presentation of his involvement with Sandy, and with what one critic describes as his "black heritage."<sup>91</sup>

To be sure, Douglass raises doubts as to whether the "authentic African experience" that Sandy represents defines a cultural identity that he can claim as his own.<sup>92</sup> Sandy tells Douglass that, with the root about his person, no white man could whip him. In effect, he maintains that the root will enable Douglass, or any slave, to thwart whites' efforts to whip him—as if to suggest that all blacks can count on African root and divination practices as a cultural resource. Douglass, however, reports that he has "no name" for Sandy's system of belief and that he has put Sandy's thoughts in his "own language," not in Sandy's. He also gives an explicitly Christian interpretation of Sandy's divination practices, calling them "dealings with the devil" but allowing too that they could express "the hand of the Lord."<sup>93</sup> In general, then, Douglass represents Sandy's divination practices as elements of a foreign culture that he cannot grasp in its own terms (hence he is driven to a "Christianizing" interpretation of those practices). Still, when he later describes his reaction to Covey's at-

tack (the fight begins when Covey tackles Douglass), Douglass writes, "I now forgot my *roots*, and remembered my pledge to *stand up in my own defense*."<sup>94</sup> Here, by italicizing and playing on the word "roots," Douglass recalls his reader to Sandy's belief in roots. And by relying on the phrase "my roots," he effectively intimates that, notwithstanding his earlier expressed skepticism, he retains some ties to Sandy's culture and spirituality. Note, however, that Douglass likewise claims that he forgot those ties when he began to fight Covey, but that he was not thereby left bereft of the solidarity of other slaves. When Covey demands that Bill and Caroline help him subdue Douglass, both slaves refuse, leading Douglass later to proclaim that "we [Douglass, Bill, and Caroline] were all in open rebellion, that morning."<sup>95</sup> As he later tells the tale, Bill and Caroline entered into solidarity with him, choosing to embrace his cause (to defend himself against Covey) as their own. Douglass wins his fight with Covey, due in part to the aid of other slaves who, on his account, were not supporting a cause that expressed an antecedently formed and racially specific spiritual or cultural orientation, but a purpose that he remembers just as he forgets that he is tied to other slaves through some such common orientation. Here, then, Douglass implicitly denies that the efficacy of collective black political action in fighting racial oppression requires that the agents of that action acknowledge and express a previously established and distinctively black spiritual or cultural identity that unites them.<sup>96</sup>

It may go without saying that Douglass's description of Sandy's role in his life also discredits the thesis that avowing and embodying such an identity is essential to the legitimacy of black political action. For if Sandy is a figure for black political agency that reflects a peculiarly black spiritual ethos, then depicting him as a traitor suggests that the expression of some such ethos, far from helping to legitimize black political action, could spell its illegitimacy. But the language of "legitimacy" and "illegitimacy" may be out of place here, because, and perhaps for good reason, it is not the language that Douglass uses. The discourse of legitimacy, I suggest, is closely and inextricably tied to a ruler-centered conception of politics.<sup>97</sup> Thus the shift to an action-in-concert conception may call for an alternative language for holding political actors accountable for what they do. And that language, Douglass suggests, is the language of fidelity and infidelity, of faithfulness and betrayal. For Douglass,

then, holding Sandy accountable for his actions would be a matter of maintaining that he had betrayed his promises and pledges to his fellows, not of asserting that his actions had failed to satisfy some criterion of legitimate rule. Put otherwise, he suggests that Sandy is answerable not for a precept he issued—for the band of brothers never “elevated” its members to the status of ruler, or commander—but for the deeds through which he, Sandy, avowed or disavowed his commitments to others. What validates and lends authority to a deed, Douglass implies, is its fidelity to such commitments, not its racial authenticity.<sup>98</sup>

Although I have been arguing that Douglass refuses political expressivism in his depiction of plantation politics, I do not take him to deny that African American politics can and sometimes should be a race-conscious enterprise that attributes significance to being black. Consider, for example, that when he and his cohort decide to keep their Freeland-plantation Sabbath school secret from whites—seeking help from a free colored man and not, as before, from a pious white man—they judge that black slaves and nonslaves can be trusted more than anyone classified as white. The condition of being black (of counting as black) has a salient significance for Douglass and his band, not because they derive their political purposes from that condition, but because those purposes—for example, resistance to slaveholder tyranny—and past experiences (the breakup of the Sabbath school at St. Michaels) prompt them to believe that reliability matters and that blacks are more reliable than whites.<sup>99</sup>

As Douglass describes it, African American plantation politics generated a race-conscious political solidarity because he and his fellow conspirators believed that the purposes around which they affiliated demanded the formation of a racially exclusive political cohort.<sup>100</sup> It is obvious, moreover, that they could have committed themselves to purposes contrary to the ones they did in fact endorse—for example, they might have decided not to resist slaveholder tyranny but to support it, perhaps on the grounds that the enslavement of blacks is God’s will. Indeed, we can imagine a group of slaves, having fallen prey to what Douglass calls “the slaveholding priestcraft,” acting in concert to reinforce God’s will by thwarting the likes of the band of brothers. For such men, being black would not mean being more reliable than whites but being subject to God’s disfavor.<sup>101</sup>

Extrapolating, then, from the particulars of Douglass’s narrative, I

wish to suggest that, as he portrays it, consent- and affiliation-based African American politics can in principle take many directions, with each related to a different interpretation of the condition of being black. In effect, Douglass invites the thought that there can exist multiple and heterogeneous forms of race-conscious African American political solidarity characterized by diverse purposes and diverse understandings of the significance of that condition. As in Bonnie Honig’s recent feminist reading of Hannah Arendt, the key idea here is that politics, rather than deriving from one identity, may produce many identities. For Honig,

Arendt’s politics is agonistic because it always resists the attractions of expressivism, for the sake of her view of . . . identity as a performative production . . . The strategy here is to proliferate difference . . . and the result might be the empowering discovery or insistence that there are . . . many ways to do one’s gender. The homogenizing impulse of some (so-called) private identities would be weakened and that would allow for greater differentiation and contestability within the frame of these “identities” themselves.<sup>102</sup>

In a similar vein, Douglass’s view of plantation politics allows that there may be multiple and mutually contestable ways of “doing” or “forging” race-conscious black solidarities. Resisting the attractions of political expressivism, which for the sake of political efficacy and legitimacy secures the purposes of black politics by appeal to an antecedently formed black spiritual or cultural identity, Douglass spurs us to regard black politics as the interplay of conflicting purposes and conflicting interpretations of the condition of being black.<sup>103</sup>

#### *Radical Reconstruction versus Assimilation*

A central aim of the present chapter is to highlight several features of Douglass’s political thought that distinguish it from the politics of expressive self-realization. Thus far, I have focused on two of those features: namely, Douglass’s non-ruler-centered depiction of plantation politics and his rejection of political expressivism. A third feature is what I have described as his radical reconstructionism.

As we have seen, Du Bois adapts some basic elements of Gustav Schmöller’s social theory to argue that African American politics should attempt to solve the “Negro Problem”; that is, to bring African American

life into conformity with the norms characteristic of America's basic social arrangements—which for Du Bois means the economic, moral, and perhaps aesthetic norms of modernity. In a nutshell, Du Bois holds that African American politics should aim to assimilate and normalize the black masses. But the aim of radical reconstruction is not the elimination of deviance; rather it is to reconstitute practices of citizenship and thereby to refound the American nation. With its emphasis on normative integration, Du Bois's politics of self-realization tends to prefigure a prominent strand of modern, American sociology that defines social "problems" and "disorganization" in terms of "deviation from norms," a theme that is still evident in the sociology of the black underclass.<sup>104</sup> In contrast to this tendency, Douglass's politics of radical reconstruction, which knows nothing of the sociology of the late nineteenth or twentieth centuries, more often appears to belong to a tradition of Roman and republican political theory.<sup>105</sup>

I have argued that Douglass presents the Covey fight as the beginning of a revolution (as a declaration of independence) that aims to reconstitute the American nation. Douglass presents his plantation politics as continuing that revolution when, after describing his insurgent band of brothers, he proclaims that the "slaveholder . . . the every hour violator of the just and inalienable rights of man . . . never lisps a syllable in commendation of the fathers of this republic . . . without inviting the knife to his own throat and asserting the rights of rebellion for his slaves." With these incendiary remarks, Douglass suggests that, in acting to assert their rights of rebellion, he and his fellow conspirators imitated the founding fathers. In other words, he suggests that they aspired to keep faith with the work of the founders (the men he also calls "the heroes of the revolution"), which was to establish a republic that respected "the just and inalienable rights of man."<sup>106</sup> By invoking the language of the Declaration of Independence ("inalienable rights"), Douglass implies that the seminal act of the founders was to commit themselves to the principles enshrined in the Declaration. In addition, he implies that this act fell short of the founders' wishes, for the reign of the slaveholder shows that the nation it established no longer erects itself on and respects those principles. Douglass and his band emulate the founders by undertaking to refound the nation—that is, by performing insurgent acts (such as preparing to escape from Freeland's plantation) that reenact the founders' founding commitment to the principles of the Declaration, hoping thus to further

the cause of transforming America into a nation that respects those principles.<sup>107</sup>

In his famous speech of July 5, 1852, excerpts of which he includes in *Bondage*, Douglass had already called for social reform that would echo the deeds of the founding fathers.<sup>108</sup> America, he says, is young and still "impressible." Indeed, "there is consolation that American is young," for "great streams are not easily turned from their channels." According to Douglass, youthful America's identity as a nation is available to be reformed. Here he charges the task of national reform to the (white) "sons" of the founding fathers: "Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work. You have no right to enjoy a child's share in the labor of your fathers, unless your children are to be blest by your labors." For Douglass, the work of the sons is to finish the work the fathers began—the work of founding a nation that respects the principles of the Declaration of Independence. "The principles contained in that instrument," he insists, "are saving principles." "Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions," he advises. Later in the speech Douglass suggests that the sons have forsaken these principles and that like the descendents of Abraham, who forsook Abraham's "faith and spirit," they have "repudiated the deeds" of their fathers: "Washington could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves. Yet his monument is built up by the price of human blood, and the traders in the bodies and souls of men shout—'We have Washington as *our father*.'" It is no surprise, then, that Douglass finally denounces the sons' jubilee celebration as "mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy," implying that their professed commitment to the ideals enshrined in the nation's founding document is insincere. In Douglass's view, there is a contradiction between the principles that the sons of the fathers purport to endorse—the principles of the Declaration—and the principles they do endorse. His main evidence for this contradiction is the "guilty practices" of slavery, which suggest that the principles of the Declaration mean nothing to the country's white citizenry, national anniversary celebrations notwithstanding: "Fellow citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretence, and your Christianity as a lie."<sup>109</sup>

I can summarize my reading of Douglass's July 5 speech by remarking



that it relies on a narrative of decline.<sup>110</sup> Considering the present in the perspective of the past, Douglass describes the present as “degenerate times.” The past to which he contrasts the present is marked by the “solid manhood” of the founders for whom nothing was “settled” that was not right: “With them, justice, liberty and humanity were ‘final;’ not slavery and oppression.” Contemporary America is false to the past, Douglass argues, for while the founders unaffectedly embraced principles that opposed slavery (a controversial claim, to be sure)—even penning these principles into the Declaration and Constitution—their heirs, their deceptive and hypocritical sons, only pretend (profess) to embrace such principles.<sup>111</sup> And while Douglass has exhorted the sons to “cling” to the Fourth of July, and to “cling” to its principles, he admits that they “cling” instead to the existence of slavery, “as if it were the sheet anchor of all [their] hopes.” In his July 5 speech, Douglass envisions American history as the tale of a fall from grace: that is, as a decline from the time of the founding acts (the Declaration, the adoption of the Constitution) through which American leaders committed themselves to principles and purposes that opposed slavery—intending therein to found a nation that respected these principles—to the time of the speech, when the sons of the fathers harbor no commitment to these principles and purposes. In the main body of *Bondage*, Douglass presents the nation’s black sons, men the July 5 speech describes as not sharing in the “inheritance of . . . liberty” bequeathed by the fathers, as imitating those heroes and as acting to refound the nation. In the July 5 speech, he calls on the nation’s white sons to do the same—that is, to reenact their fathers’ founding commitment to the principles of the Declaration (and thus to establish a nation without slavery)—even as he berates them for not having kept faith with that commitment.<sup>112</sup>

According to Hannah Arendt, the ancient Romans conceptualized acts of political innovation as acts of refounding the old institutions. Thus she writes that “all decisive political changes in the course of Roman history were reconstitutions, namely, reforms of the old institutions and the retrievance of the original act of foundation.”<sup>113</sup> For the Romans, Arendt suggests, acts that radically transformed Roman institutions were deeds that reenacted and so revived the original act of founding Rome. Douglass develops a similar notion of political innovation based on the idea that the “original act” that founded the American nation was the founding fathers’ committing themselves to the principles embodied in

the Declaration. For Douglass, acts that could advance a radical reconstruction of American institutions—for example, the rebellious acts his band of brothers performs and the revolutionary acts he wishes the nation’s white sons to undertake—were deeds that aimed to refound the American Republic by reenacting the founding fathers’ founding commitment to those principles. Like the Romans, Douglass interprets the path to radical political change—to change that would rid America of the “venomous creature” that is slavery—as the path of reestablishing the Republic on the founding principles that the white sons of the founders have repudiated.<sup>114</sup> In sum, and reminiscent of Cicero and other writers in the tradition of republican political theory, he suggests that the decline of the Republic is due to the moral failing of its sons, and that the restoration of the Republic will require their moral transformation.<sup>115</sup>

To begin to appreciate fully the nonassimilationist implications of Douglass’s radical reconstructionism, we may recall Du Bois’s suggestion that there was a “flat contradiction” between southern whites’ color prejudice, which helped to perpetuate the color line, and their “beliefs and professions,” which expressed a commitment to the ideals evident in the “caste-levelling precepts of Christianity” and in the principle of “equality of opportunity for all men.”<sup>116</sup> As I have argued in previous chapters, the early, Schmoller-inspired Du Bois was an anomaly theorist who both took the practice of racial prejudice to be extrinsically related to the prevailing “group” ideals and norms constituting modern American society, and hoped to realize those ideals through (in part) a politics of self-assertion (one prong of the politics of self-realization) that combated racial prejudice with the aim, ultimately, of assimilating African-American life to group norms. For Du Bois the core ideals were both professed and believed, which is to say that he declined to interpret the contradiction between the ideals and the practice of prejudice as an indication of hypocrisy. In this respect, Du Bois’s thinking prefigured that of Gunnar Myrdal, who similarly declined to interpret the clash between the American creed and the practice of racism as a form of hypocrisy. Americans, Myrdal insisted, were truly committed to the creed: it was a “living reality” and a “living actuality” that they did not merely profess.<sup>117</sup> Like Du Bois, Myrdal was an anomaly theorist whose political prescriptions were geared to eliminate deviant practices through the promotion of widely and sincerely professed ideals.<sup>118</sup>

In the July 5 speech, Douglass writes neither as an anomaly theorist,

nor as an assimilationist (in Du Bois's sense), for unlike Du Bois and Myrdal he does not propose to bring group practices into conformity with norms of behavior or development corresponding to prevailing group ideals.<sup>119</sup> In Douglass's view, such a proposal would have been in error, because the prevailing ideals were proslavery. In short, whether or not one agrees with Douglass that the founding fathers meant to found a nation wherein slavery had no place, it is critical to see that, formally speaking, his July 5 argument for reconstructing the American polity invoked the antislavery ideals to which he insists the founders were committed as a counterpoint to the prevailing, proslavery ideals of his hypocritical, insincere contemporaries.

In contrast to Du Bois and Myrdal, Douglass promotes a politics predicated on ideals that have ceased to be a living reality in the hearts and minds of the nation's white citizens. By recalling for those citizens the antislavery commitments of the founders, he hopes radically to transform their hearts and minds—thus, ultimately, to enlist them in the revolutionary project of refounding the American nation by renewing those commitments; or, more exactly, the project of reconstituting the nation's prevailing group ideals by embracing the founders' ideals as their ideals. Were that project to have been fulfilled, it then would have made sense to demand that the nation's practices be brought into conformity with the norms corresponding to its prevailing ideals—but not otherwise.<sup>120</sup> For Douglass, the narrative of American history is the story of an ongoing contest between divergent ideals and commitments. The politics of radical reconstruction is the politics of contesting and displacing those prevailing ideals and commitments that signal the decay and decline of the Republic.<sup>121</sup>

In chapter 4 of *Bondage*, Douglass writes,

Public opinion in such a quarter [the slave plantation] is not likely to be very efficient in protecting the slave from cruelty. On the contrary, it must increase and intensify his wrongs. *Public opinion seldom differs very widely from public practice.* To be a restraint upon cruelty and vice, public opinion must emanate from a humane and virtuous community.<sup>122</sup>

Suggesting here that prevailing practices tend to track prevailing opinion, ideals, and the like, Douglass, I propose, prefigured Ralph Ellison's

view that citizenship is a fabric of habits—of practices informed by opinions and beliefs and governed by norms—and that the elimination of racial subordination required the reconstitution of that fabric (here, as in the introduction, I follow Danielle Allen's reading of Ellison).<sup>123</sup> Writing in the early 1850s, Douglass sensed that satisfying the prevailing proslavery opinion and ideals of the white sons would entail the perpetuation of both the white sons' practices of domination, complicity with domination, and hypocrisy; and the enslaved black sons' subjection to a system of domination that worked to reduce man to a level with the brute—that is, that assimilated black bondsmen to the norms of brutish behavior. For Douglass, the reconstruction of the nation required the reconstitution of the opinion, ideals, and practices constituting and intrinsic to the identity of the nation in its fall from grace. And for Douglass, as for Ellison, this meant transforming the habits of both the oppressors and the oppressed. Assimilating black behavior to the practices of domination, complicity with domination, and so on would no more reconstruct the nation than would assimilating black behavior to the behavior of brutes, for a nation of black and white masters and hypocrites would no more reflect the founding fathers' commitments than a nation of white masters and hypocrites. To reconstruct the nation and restore the Republic, the enslaved black sons must repudiate the coerced habits of brute-like behavior and, imitating the fathers, declare their independence and rights to rebellion.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, to reconstruct the nation and restore the Republic, the white sons must repudiate their habits of domination, complicity, and hypocrisy, and, imitating the fathers, commit or recommit themselves to the Declaration's ideals. In Douglass's gendered, revolutionary imagination, the black sons and the white sons must conspire together to refound, reconstruct, and reconstitute the American nation.<sup>125</sup>

#### Second Declaration of Independence, Extra-Plantation Politics

It is well known that Douglass began to affiliate with William Lloyd Garrison just a few years after he escaped slavery. Here, I do not rehearse the story of his extensive activities as speaker for Garrison's organization. Rather I concentrate on one of the accounts he gives of his break with

Garrison. Douglass only completes that break in 1850–1851, when he announces his rejection of the theory that the Constitution is a proslavery document. In *Bondage*, however, he suggests that he had declared his independence from Garrison and his tutelage years earlier. Unifying Douglass's story is the proposition that texts, written and spoken, lend themselves to conflicting interpretations. Douglass introduces this proposition when discussing slave masters' opposition to teaching slaves to read. Thus he sets the stage for suggesting an important analogy between his treatment as a slave and his treatment by the white leaders of Garrison's movement.

When recounting the breakup of the St. Michaels Sabbath schools, Douglass seems to endorse a Protestant approach to biblical hermeneutics:

These Christian class leaders were . . . consistent. They had settled the question, that slavery is *right*, and, by that standard, they determined that Sabbath schools are wrong. To be sure, they were Protestant, and held to the great Protestant right of every man to "*search the scriptures*" for himself; but, then, to all general rules, there are *exceptions*. How convenient! What crimes, may not be committed under the doctrine of the last remark.<sup>126</sup>

In the course of his later transactions with the Garrisonians, Douglass secularizes the Protestant approach to biblical interpretation. Specifically, he applies that approach to the problem of interpreting *the text of his life*. Douglass reports that when stumping for Garrison, Garrison would speak after Douglass, taking Douglass "as his text." Coming just a couple of pages after he describes Garrison as a man "raised up by God," who took the Bible as "his text book," Douglass's claim that he served Garrison as a text emphasizes the continuity between Garrison's appeal to the Bible and his appeal to Douglass—or, more precisely, to the text Douglass produced by narrating his life as a slave.<sup>127</sup> The problem that arises here is the one that arose at St. Michaels. Notwithstanding their professed Protestantism, the masters at St. Michaels behaved as if they were priests who alone enjoyed the authority to interpret the meaning of scripture. Similarly, the Garrisonians behaved toward Douglass as if they alone enjoyed the authority to interpret the meaning of his narrative of his life as a slave. "Give us the facts," the Garrisonians tell Douglass;

"we will take care of the philosophy."<sup>128</sup> Douglass responded to this demand by declaring his independence from the hermeneutical authority of Garrisonian abolitionism:

Just here there arose some embarrassment. It was impossible for me to repeat the same old story month after month, and to keep up my interest in it . . . "Tell your story, Frederick," would whisper my then revered friend, William Lloyd Garrison . . . I could not always obey, for I was now reading and thinking. New views of the subject were presented to my mind. It did not entirely satisfy me to *narrate* wrongs; I felt like *denouncing* them. I could not always curb my moral indignation for the perpetrators of slaveholding villainy, long enough for a circumstantial statement of the facts which I felt almost everybody must know. Besides, I was growing, and needed room. "People won't believe you ever was a slave, Frederick, if you keep on this way," said Friend Foster. "Be yourself," said Collins, "and tell your story." It was said to me, "Better have a *little* of the plantation manner of speech than not; 'tis not best that you seem too learned." These excellent friends were actuated by the best of motives, and were not altogether wrong in their advice; and still I must speak just the word that seemed to *me* the word to be spoken *by* me.<sup>129</sup>

When Douglass became a Garrisonian, he revered Garrison and fell prey to a "slavish" adoration of the members of Garrison's cohort.<sup>130</sup> And as we have seen, he later depicts Garrison's politics as ruler-centered—that is, as revolving around his revered friend's directives. In keeping with this depiction, Douglass now presents Garrison as dictating the "story" Douglass should tell, and as expecting that Douglass summarily "obey" his commands. In addition, Douglass suggests that the white members of Garrison's cohort dominated his activity as a public speaker and storyteller, exercising a power arbitrarily to interfere with—to censor and shape—his speech. They possessed a power of arbitrary interference, he implies, for they controlled his speech without taking into account his opinion of the words he would speak. Douglass declares his independence from the hermeneutical authority of the Garrisonian abolitionists by proclaiming that henceforth he will not submit to their rule and so permit them to dominate his speech; regardless of their judgment of the

word he intends to speak, he will speak the word that seems to him to be the word to be spoken by him.<sup>131</sup> Douglass will not only narrate his story; he will issue philosophical and moral interpretations of it, for he is no less entitled than the Garrisonians to search the scripture of his life for meaning.

Douglass's declaration of independence paves the way for an extra-plantation politics of black print journalism, a politics that he initiates when he founds his newspaper, the *North Star*. In *Bondage*, this politics comes into view as a practice of freedom: to wit, as a practice of collective action and speech that is not subject to the domination of the Garrisonian abolitionists. Like his plantation politics, the nondominated, extra-plantation journalistic politics in which he joins with other free blacks illustrates a form of black political agency that is not captured by the politics-as-rule model exemplified by Garrison and later favored by Du Bois; is race-conscious though not expressivist; and is geared to the project of radical reconstruction.

*Reconstructionist, Race-Conscious Politics without Rule—Again!*

By establishing an exclusively black newspaper “devoted to the interests of [his] enslaved and oppressed people,” Douglass tried to advance the adoption of “abolition principles” by the citizens of the United States. Specifically, he argued that the low estimate of the “negro, as a man” had hindered the adoption of these principles, and that the creation of a good black paper would help to alter this estimate by showing black people’s “capacity for a more exalted civilization than slavery and prejudice had assigned to them.”<sup>132</sup> When Douglass recounts his role as an instigator on Mr. Freeland’s plantation, he remarks that “here began my *public* speaking.”<sup>133</sup> When he recounts his establishment of a black newspaper, he shows himself to be continuing his public career by instituting a public forum that he and other free blacks can collectively deploy to combat racial oppression. Declining as before (as in his portrait of plantation politics) to adopt a rule- and ruler-centered notion of black politics, Douglass’s representation of his extra-plantation, journalistic politics pivots around the idea of public discourse and, *avant la lettre*, the notion of a black “counterpublic.” It is worth noting, moreover, that Douglass initially invokes these concepts in the “Editor’s Preface” to *Bondage*, most immediately to justify his decision to write *Bondage* but implicitly with the more

general aim of justifying the public sphere-centered politics to which both the *North Star* and *Bondage* contribute:

Dear Friend: I have long entertained, as you very well know, a somewhat positive repugnance to writing or speaking anything for the *public*, which could, with any degree of plausibility, make me liable to the imputation of seeking personal notoriety, for its own sake. Entertaining that feeling very sincerely . . . I have often refused to narrate my personal experience in *public* anti-slavery meetings . . . In my letters and speeches, I have generally aimed to discuss the question of Slavery in the light of fundamental principles, and upon facts, notorious and open to all . . . I have never placed my opposition to slavery on a basis as narrow as my own enslavement . . . I have also felt that it was best for those having histories worth the writing . . . to commit such work to hands other than their own. To write of one’s self, in such a manner as not to incur the imputation of weakness, vanity, and egotism, is a work within the ability of but a few . . .

These considerations caused me to hesitate, when first you kindly urged me to prepare for *publication* a full account of my life as a slave, and my life as a freeman.

Nevertheless, I see, with you, many reasons for regarding my autobiography as exceptional in its character, and as being, in some sense, naturally beyond those reproaches which honorable and sensitive minds dislike to incur. It is not to illustrate the heroic achievement of a man, but to vindicate a just and beneficent principle . . . by letting in the light of truth upon a system, esteemed by some as a blessing, and by others as a curse and a crime. I agree with you, that this system is now at the bar of *public opinion* . . . Any facts . . . calculated to enlighten the *public mind*, by revealing the true nature, character and tendency of the slave system, are in order . . .

I see, too, that there are special reasons why I should write my own biography, in preference to employing another to do it. Not only is slavery on trial, but . . . the enslaved people are also on trial. It is alleged that they are naturally inferior; that they are so low in the scale of humanity, and so utterly stupid, that they are

unconscious of their wrongs, and do not apprehend their rights. Looking, then, at your request, from this stand-point, and wishing everything of which you think me capable to go to the benefit of my afflicted people, I part with my doubts and hesitation, and proceed to furnish you the desired manuscript; hoping that you may be able to make such arrangements for its *publication* as shall be best adapted to accomplish that good which you so enthusiastically anticipate.<sup>134</sup>

In *The Letters of the Republic*, Michael Warner argues that in eighteenth-century America the print ideology shaping the public sphere “valorized the general above the personal and construed the opposition between the two in the republican terms of virtue and interest.”<sup>135</sup> According to Warner, republican print ideology saw print as the proper medium for public discourse, which it conceptualized as the rational, general, and impersonal expression of civic virtue. In short, it held that printed, public discourse should detach itself from private interest and concentrate on the common good. For Benjamin Franklin, Warner’s ideal example of the republican “citizen-in-print,” achieving this aim meant freeing public discourse from the “localization of the personal, the bodily, the corruptible.”<sup>136</sup>

Douglass begins his “Editor’s Preface” by relying on this rhetoric of republican print ideology. Adverting to the distinctions between writing (and speaking) for the public and seeking personal notoriety; between public meetings and personal experience; and between committing his story to others and risking the imputation of weakness, vanity, and egotism, he characterizes public discourse in terms that starkly oppose what is public and impartial to what is personal and corrupt. Douglass has hesitated to write his story because the genre of autobiography threatens to contaminate public discourse with personal vice. Were someone else to tell his tale, he implies—and here, it seems, he has in mind someone white—it would be possible to enlighten the public mind, influence public opinion, and still avoid that threat. Yet Douglass finally decides to tell his own tale, for enlightening the public entails more than an impartial description of the true nature of slavery. Specifically, it requires a demonstration of black people’s humanity, of their awareness of their rights, and so on. Absent some such demonstration, a putatively virtuous public

discourse that supposedly targets the common good is destined to convict black people of stupidity and inferiority. Douglass must write his own story to correct public discourse, but the narrative he presents will not reflect his personal interests. Rather he will write with an eye to the circumstances of black people generally, aspiring to a voice that is more general and impersonal than a personal voice, but less general and impersonal than public discourse is ordinarily. Speaking as if on behalf of a “black public,” he will produce a public discourse about the common good of black people (slaves and free blacks included) that, through its very existence, criticizes the ruling public discourse, contesting its presumption of black inferiority and its pretension to speak for the common good of all. In effect, Douglass will project his voice as the agent of what contemporary political theorists would call a “subaltern counterpublic,” a discursive arena wherein the members of a subordinated social group “invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs”—that is, interpretations that disrupt and challenge the interpretations advanced in “official public spheres.”<sup>137</sup>

Douglass’s argument for creating a black newspaper parallels his argument for writing his autobiography. In short, he defends both projects by appealing to their probable efficacy as means for countering the low estimation of blacks in the public mind. In his “Editor’s Preface,” Douglass conceptualizes the possibility of a subaltern, black counterpublic and represents *Bondage* as an attempt to shape a black counterpublic discourse. Near the end of his book, he represents his newspaper as the institutional embodiment of what he has conceptualized:

My friends in England had resolved to raise a given sum to purchase for me a press and printing materials; and I already saw myself wielding my pen, as well as my voice, in the great work of renovating the public mind, and building up a public sentiment which should, at least, send slavery and oppression to the grave, and to restore to “liberty and the pursuit of happiness” the people with whom I suffered, both as a slave and as a freeman.<sup>138</sup>

At a time when “there was not, in the United States, a single newspaper regularly published by the colored people,” Douglass took the initiative to put “in the hands of persons of the despised race” a public forum

in the form of a "tolerably well conducted press"—a vehicle for those persons to call out "the mental energies of the race," to make themselves acquainted with their "latent powers," and to enkindle "the hope that for them there is a future."<sup>139</sup> Depicting himself as resolving to collaborate with other freedmen to establish a collectively run black newspaper, he brings to a head his portrait of his political involvements with free blacks, which began when he participated in the debates of the East Baltimore Mental Improvement Society, and continued when he attended the public meetings of the colored people of New Bedford. Like his description of his plantation politics, Douglass's treatment of his extra-plantation politics imagines blacks acting and speaking in concert: to improve themselves, to pass and advance "resolutions," and to renovate the "public mind" of a wider public beyond their subaltern group.<sup>140</sup> And while Douglass represents extra-plantation black politics as a race-conscious enterprise—that is, as an undertaking that is characteristically shaped by one or another view of the stakes and, more generally, the significance of being black—he never implies that its efficacy or legitimacy depends on the expression of a collective spiritual or cultural identity.

As we have seen, Douglass supposes that prevailing practices track predominant public opinion and ideals. And that supposition, I suggest, explains his interest in forming a black counterpublic to renovate the prevailing public mind. Douglass expects that a renovation of the white American public mind will help to engender new political practices and, ultimately, a radical transformation of the fabric of political habits constituting the nation in its fall from grace. In the closing pages of *Bondage*, Douglass recalls that he has used his newspaper to reshape the public mind on the matter of constitutional interpretation. Having repudiated the authority of Garrisonian hermeneutics as it applies to the text of his life, he also repudiates it as it applies to the text of the Constitution.<sup>141</sup> Declaring a politically "protestant" theory of constitutional interpretation, he insists that "every 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 one."<sup>142</sup> Douglass defends an antislavery interpretation of the Constitution, hoping to make his interpretation prevail and thus to persuade fellow citizens both to commit themselves to the ideals he finds in the Constitution and to alter their

practices accordingly. "All I ask of the American people," he writes, is "that they live up to the Constitution, adopt its principles, imbibe its spirit and enforce its provisions."<sup>143</sup> For Douglass, then, the black counterpublic's battle over constitutional interpretation is part of a radical reconstructionist battle to reconstitute the nation: first, by reconstituting citizens' prevailing interpretation (their public opinion) of the nation's constitution; and second, by urging them to bring their practices into accord with that re-constituted interpretation.<sup>144</sup>

### Conclusion: Douglass, Du Bois, and the Negro Problem

In this final section I consider Douglass's speeches "The Negro Problem," delivered in 1890, and "Lessons of the Hour," which he gave in 1894.<sup>145</sup> Both speeches belong to the very same decade as Du Bois's "The Study of the Negro Problems" (1897), with "Lessons" coming fewer than ten years before the publication of *Souls* (1903). Because the elder Douglass's republican and radical-reconstructionist discussions of the "Negro problem" are nearly contemporary to the young Du Bois's writing on the topic, they offer a valuable reference point for evaluating Du Bois's assimilationism.

A thesis central to America's late nineteenth-century discourse about the "Negro problem" was that the Negro is, as Douglass put it, a "dangerous person."<sup>146</sup> In *Souls*, in the closing paragraphs of "Of the Sons of Master and Man," Du Bois responds to this thesis by contrasting the argument that southern whites adduce to support it with a counterargument that he himself elaborates. The argument of the southerners is "of great strength," he allows, but "not a whit stronger than the argument of thinking Negroes." Submitting that the social condition of the Negro is a danger or, as Du Bois writes, a "menace," southern whites cite the Negro's "ignorance, shiftlessness, poverty, and crime" to justify the racial prejudice wherewith they hold the Negro at arm's length, thereby preventing him from infringing on and "sweep[ing] away the culture of [their] fathers [and] the hope of [their] children." Although Du Bois begins to counter this position with the recognition that "the condition of our masses is bad," he immediately adds that there is "adequate historical cause for this, and unmistakable evidence that no small number have,

in spite of tremendous disadvantages, risen to the level of American civilization." Du Bois concludes his retort on a less defensive, more critical note:

When, by proscription and prejudice, these same Negroes [those who have risen to the level of American civilization] are classed with and treated like the lowest of their people, simply *because* they are Negroes, such a policy not only discourages thrift and intelligence among black men but puts a direct premium on the very things you complain of,—inefficiency and crime. Draw lines of crime, of incompetency, of vice, as tightly and uncompromisingly as you will, for all these things must be proscribed; but a color-line not only does not accomplish this purpose, but thwarts it.<sup>147</sup>

Du Bois can resolve the conflict between the two arguments he presents because he interprets the discourse about the Negro problem and, specifically, the danger (menace) thesis set forth by southern whites in terms of the social theory he sketches in "The Study of the Negro Problems." Each argument deserves the appreciation and sympathy of the "other's position," because each holds a grain of truth. The behavior of the black masses presents a danger to American civilization (to the culture of the fathers, and so forth), Du Bois implicitly admits, but it need not do so, for it is possible and desirable to shape black lives to the norms of American civilization. Thus the Negro must "realize more deeply than he does at present the need of uplifting the masses of his people." And while white people may be justified in shunning incompetence, vice, and the like, they must admit that not all blacks fall short of the norms of civilization, and that treating all as if they do will effectively thwart all attempts to transform the black masses into assimilated, civilized Americans. Whites, then, must "realize more vividly than they have yet done the deadening and disastrous effect of a color-prejudice that classes Phillis Wheatley and Sam Hose in the same despised class." For Du Bois, color-related prejudice and the backward social condition of the black masses "act as reciprocal cause and effect" such that "a change in neither alone will bring the desired effect."<sup>148</sup> Applying the social-theoretical framework of "The Study of the Negro Problems," he argues, in fine, that the danger the masses present can be eradicated through assimila-

tion and that eradicating that danger requires a two-pronged attack on the mutually reinforcing obstacles to assimilation.

In chapter 3 of *Souls*, Du Bois describes Washington's politics as one of compromise. Given the opportunity, Douglass, I conjecture, would have similarly described the young Du Bois's politics, arguing that Du Bois conceded too much in requiring sympathy and appreciation for the white southerner's thesis that the Negro is a menace. According to Douglass, the claim that the Negro presents a danger to society is a "red herring," a distraction that is nonetheless symptomatic of the "true problem," which "is not the negro, but the nation." And this true, national problem, he insists, emanates from the dearth of civic virtue among the southern, "white ruffians" whose persecution, lawlessness, and corruption of the ballot box express a "moral depravity" that dishonors the nation. Assuming "to control the destiny of [the] Republic as well as the destiny of the negro," the very men "who led the nation in a dance of blood" now attempt to turn back the clock, asking that the polity "undo all that it did by the suppression of rebellion and in maintenance of the Union." Although the Negro poses no threat to the Union, the Union has begun to endanger the Negro due to sectional reconciliation and the new political power of the white southerner. Discourse to the effect that there is a Negro problem hides the proper object of political concern, Douglass proclaims, which is the moral integrity of the nation.<sup>149</sup>

"There is nothing the matter with the negro," says Douglass, "he is all right."<sup>150</sup> But there may well be something the matter with the nation, as the elder Douglass no less than the Douglass of the 1850s is eager to proclaim:

But let me say again, the South neither really fears the ignorance of the negro, nor the supremacy of the negro. It is not the ignorant negro, but the intelligent North that it fears; not the supremacy of a different race from itself, but the supremacy of the Republican party. It is not the men who are emancipated but the people who emancipated them that disturb its repose. In other words the trouble is not racial but political. It is not the race and color of the vote, *but the type of civilization represented by the vote*. Disguise this as it may, the real thing that troubles the south is the Republican party, its principles, and its ascendancy in the Southern States.

When it talks of negro ignorance, and of negro supremacy, it means this, and simply this, and only this.<sup>151</sup>

For Douglass, the thesis that the Negro is a danger misrepresents a complaint about the nation as a complaint about the Negro. And the effect of that misrepresentation, he suggests, is to disguise a question about the type of civilization that should prevail in the United States—a political issue—as a question about the Negro's fitness for civilization per se, which is a racial issue. Douglass meets southern discourse about the Negro problem with a hermeneutics of suspicion that unmasks its pretended attack on the Negro as an attack on the very principles (Republican party principles) that have come to define the civilization of the nation in the wake of the Civil War. Put otherwise, Douglass interprets that discourse as an attempt to promote the re-constitution of the nation through the disavowal of principles that he presents as *res adjudicata*—as having settled the identity of the nation as a whole once and for all.<sup>152</sup>

From Douglass's perspective, Du Bois concedes too much to the white southerner because he takes the danger thesis too seriously. To be sure, he responds critically to the thesis by proposing that the putative want of fit between the Negro and American civilization is due as much to white prejudice as it is to the backward social condition of the Negro. Still—and this is the critical point—Du Bois pursues the southerner's bait, running after his red herring, precisely to the extent that he assumes that there is in fact a danger, a want of fit, that needs to be addressed. As I argue in Chapter 4, Du Bois too often neglects to question the validity of norms adduced in the name of American civilization: to borrow the words of a contemporary political theorist, he takes for granted "the unimpeachable desirability [and] estimability" of norms of this sort.<sup>153</sup> But Douglass puts such norms into question, suggesting that any decision to endorse them must await an interrogation as to whether they are norms of tyranny—norms that help to rationalize and reinforce the "dominion of whites [and] the . . . subjection of blacks"—or norms of republican freedom.<sup>154</sup> In short, he insists on the fundamental, political importance of asking whether the type of civilization that the danger ideologues and their sympathetic, appreciative interlocutors endorse and take for granted is a type of civilization that merits endorsement in the first place. From the standpoint of Douglass's republican and radical re-

constructionist political thought, the question of whether the principles governing the polity are the right principles—whether they define appropriate standards of evaluation—must always take political priority over questions as to whether a particular group constitutes a danger to those principles or can be shaped to conform to them. And where these secondary questions do indeed obtain priority, it must immediately be suspected that they have been invoked to obscure a political struggle over the governing principles. Given these imperatives, Douglass's political thought could never pivot around the problem of the masses.



American Republic" express the "pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence," see *ibid.*, 43. For his appeal to the Declaration in the context of his discussion of Washington's failure to give the struggle against prejudice and for recognition its due (which I discuss in Chapter 2), see *ibid.*, 71-72.

85. In "Conservation," Du Bois associates what is specific to Negro identity, in contrast to what defines the Negro's "Americanism," with a "subtle sense of song" that is the source of the music and the fairy tales that "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" similarly associates with the Negro (and, in the case of fairy tales, with the Indian). And in "Our Spiritual Strivings" he describes "we black men" as America's "sole oasis of simple faith and reverence." A somewhat different picture seems to emerge in "The Sorrow Songs," I am arguing, for there Du Bois presents Negro song and music as the media through which Negro faith in the non-peculiarly Negro ideal of reciprocal recognition finds expression. Put succinctly, Du Bois's interpretation of the sorrow songs works effectively to soften the contrast between what is specific to Negro identity and what defines the Negro's Americanism. It should be added, finally, that Du Bois's striking claim in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" that "there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes" already anticipates this "softening." For this claim represents Negro difference not as a difference in ideals, but as a difference in the faithfulness with which Negroes promote the pure human spirit expressed in American ideals. See Du Bois, "Conservation," 234, and *Souls*, 43.

86. In "Of the Sons of Master and Man," Du Bois similarly suggests that the principle of equal opportunity—which, I have argued, he interprets in terms of the ideal of reciprocal recognition (see my discussion in Chapter 2 of Du Bois's reference in "of Our Spiritual Strivings" to "having the doors of Opportunity" closed roughly in one's face)—is a principle endorsed by white as well as black Americans (see *Souls*, 146). In Chapter 2, I examine the relationship between the ideal of recognition and the ideal of incorporation through assimilation.

87. Ernest Allen has likewise and persuasively taken Du Bois to task for failing to fulfill the promise in *Souls*' first chapter to distinguish between American and Negro ideals. See Ernest Allen, "Du Boisian Double Consciousness: The Unsustainable Argument," *Massachusetts Review* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 229-230.

88. See "The Study of the Negro Problems," in *The Seventh Son: The Thought and Writings of W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Julius Lester (New York: Vintage, 1971), 234. As I initially noted in Chapter 1, and note again later, Du Bois in this essay holds that the Negro's want of social efficiency is his "great deficiency." Thus he implies that the Negro's other (economic and educational) shortcomings are likewise, if lesser, or less significant, deficiencies.

89. Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity in Western Political Thought*, expanded ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 377.

90. I develop this point in connection to my discussion of "Conservation" and "Of the Training of Black Men" in Chapter 1.

91. See my discussion of Du Bois's criticism of the politics of revolt and revenge in Chapter 2.

92. I discuss Du Bois's criticism of demagogues in Chapter 1. For a discussion of the conflict between elite and nonelite black leaders, and of the different agendas

and styles of leadership separating them in the 1870s and 1880s (especially as relates to controversy in connection to the southern emigrationist movement), see Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 337-345.

93. For a detailed and largely persuasive discussion of Du Bois's commitment to an organizational model of black politics throughout his career, see Reed, *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*, chapters 3 and 5.

94. For Du Bois's later, critical reaction in *Dusk of Dawn* to his earlier failure to question prevailing norms and ideals, see Chapter 1. For a historical account of the post-emancipation and, later, post-Redemption political struggles of the freedmen that effectively puts into question Du Bois's picture of the black "masses," see Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet*, esp. chapter 7. For Fortune's critique of modern, capitalist civilization, see T. Thomas Fortune, *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2007), esp. chapters 11-16.

#### 5. DOUGLASS'S PRACTICES OF POLITICS

1. For discussion of the many references to Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in nineteenth-century African American letters, see Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 124, 496.

2. Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto 2, stanza 74, line 710, in *The Complete Poetical Works of Byron*, ed. Paul E. More (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905).

3. In the text, Du Bois sharply separates the two epigraphs with a dotted line.

4. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 66-67.

5. See *ibid.*, p. 62, and M. F. Armstrong and Helen W. Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students, with Fifty Cabin and Plantation Songs* arranged by Thomas P. Fenner (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1874), 222-223. I follow Sundquist in assuming that the Hampton volume was the source of Du Bois's epigraphs; see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 497.

6. Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 222-223.

7. Du Bois, *Souls*, 62. The reading I give of the significance of Du Bois's placing of this epigraph differs from that given by Sundquist (cf. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 496-497), although I agree with Sundquist that the epigraph's allusion to mourning serves as a sort of ironic counterpoint to Du Bois's praise of Washington. It should be noted, also, that Fenner's arrangement of "A Great Camp-meetin'" indicates that the same six bars of music are meant to accompany different choral lyrics in each of the song's subsequent (second, third, fourth, and fifth) stanzas. But unlike the choral lyrics of the first stanza, none of these other lyrics seems to bear directly on Du Bois's engagement with Washington.

8. Du Bois, *Souls*, 72.

9. For an extensive discussion of African Americans' analogical use of the Exo-

du story to interpret African American history, politics, and so on, see Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *Exodus! Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

10. Du Bois, *Souls*, 40.

11. *Ibid.*, 41, 61. Cf. Numbers 20:17, 21:22.

12. Du Bois, *Souls*, 70.

13. See Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, on 5 July 1852," *Frederick Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 1847-1854, ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 359-388.

14. Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), x.

15. For a good introduction to the 1845 *Narrative*, see, especially, Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, edited and introduction by David W. Blight (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993). Blight's introduction to this edition ("A Psalm of Freedom," 1-23) gives due emphasis to the heroic, individualistic character of the *Narrative*. For a detailed discussion of the communitarian turn in *Bondage*, see Williams L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 214-239, 280-291. For further discussion of the differences between the *Narrative* and *Bondage*, see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 83-112. For *Life and Times's* emphasis on the doctrines of self-reliant individualism (compare Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 92) and economic self-help, see Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: Written by Himself* (1892; New York: Collier Books, 1962), 360, 376, 466, 479-480, 505-506. See too Waldo Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, chap. 10, for an extended account of the theme of the self-made man in Douglass's later speeches and writings. I do not want to suggest that there is nothing in *Bondage* that prefigures Washington's celebration of the spirit of economic self-help, for, as Robert S. Levine has shown, that spirit is explicitly evident in the opening pages of part 2 of *Bondage* ("Life as a Freeman"). See, on this point, Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 134-136.

16. Douglass's letter to the editor who invited him to write *Bondage* comprises more than half of the book's preface and indicates that *Bondage's* purpose is to enlighten the public mind with respect to the "true nature, character, and tendency of the slave system" (*Bondage*, 4). Both "The Nature of Slavery" and the excerpts from "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" similarly contribute to this purpose. The preface and appendix also shed light on Douglass's understanding of the practice of freedom.

17. See my discussion of *Dusk of Dawn* in the main body of Chapter 1, and of *Dusk of Dawn, Dark Princess*, and the late "How United Are the Negroes" in the notes to Chapter 1.

18. In *Black Reconstruction*, for example, Du Bois invokes the figure of John Henry to represent the political agency of the black worker (the "underlying cause" of the Civil War) as expressing "the philosophy of life and action which slavery

bred in the souls of black folk." See W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 14-15. For a similar interpretation of these pages, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Books, 1983), 322-323. For Du Bois on African communalism, see W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (Piscataway: Transaction, 2000), 219.

19. For example, Charles Mills has suggested that Du Bois's discussion of the wages of whiteness in *Black Reconstruction* reflects a rejection of anomaly theories of white supremacy. See Charles Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 135.

20. See Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. and introduction by William L. Andrews (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 17. In the first chapter of *Representative Men*, Emerson writes, "No man in all the procession of famous men is reason or illumination, or that essence we were looking for; but is an exhibition in some quarter of new possibilities." See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men*, introduction by Andrew Delbanco (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 19. For an insightful discussion of Emerson's (and Nietzsche's) notion of the exemplar, see Stanley Cavell's essay "Aversive Thinking," the first chapter of his *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 10-11, 33-63.

21. Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997), 10.

22. Douglass, *Bondage*, 29.

23. *Ibid.*, 45.

24. *Ibid.*, 48.

25. See, for example, Douglass's discussion of Colonel Lloyd's response to Mr. Gore's murder of Demby. See also his discussion of his appeal to Thomas Auld after Covey has abused him. Auld, Douglass tells us, offered a "full justification" of Covey in response to Douglass's appeal. See Douglass, *Bondage*, 79-80, 142.

26. *Ibid.*, 78.

27. *Ibid.*, 73-74.

28. For Douglass's suggestion that the plantation is a kind of "public" see *ibid.*, 44. Compare too the following remarks, which help to set the stage for Douglass's description of Aaron Anthony's brutal beating of Esther: "What may have been mechanically and heartlessly done by the overseer, is now done with a will. The man [the slaveholder] who now wields the lash is irresponsible. *He may, if he pleases, cripple, or kill, without fear of consequences; except insofar as it may concern profit or loss.*" Douglass, *Bondage*, 57, emphasis mine. Significantly, Douglass acknowledges the existence of laws meant to protect the lives of slaves, but notes that "the very parties who are nominally protected, are not permitted to give evidence, in courts of law, against the only class of persons from whom abuse, outrage, and murder might be reasonably apprehended." See Douglass, *Bondage*, 81.

29. *Ibid.*, 58.

30. *Ibid.*, 95.

31. See Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. 31–79. See also Philip Pettit, “Keeping Republican Freedom Simple: On a Difference with Quentin Skinner,” *Political Theory* 30 (June 2002): 339–356. Douglass’s first exposure to Republican notions of domination, and of freedom as nondomination, is likely to have been through his reading of *The Columbian Orator*—especially the speech by G. Cassius. The book also contains speeches by Cato and Cicero, which would also have contributed to Douglass’s early introduction to Republican political thought. See Caleb Binham, *The Columbian Orator*, ed. David W. Blight (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 15–16, 41–41, 125–127.

32. Here I follow Pettit’s formulation in his *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 78–79. For enlightenment on these matters, especially as pertains to certain tensions in Pettit’s formulation of his position (which I do not address here), I am indebted to conversations with Patchen Markell, and to Markell’s essay “The Insufficiency of Non-Domination,” *Political Theory* 36, no. 1 (2008): 9–36.

33. Douglass, *Bondage*, 274.

34. *Ibid.*, 54.

35. In at least one place (*Bondage*, 77), Douglass suggests that overseers are tyrannical and masters “lawful.” As I read him, his point here is that the members of the class of overseers are by nature tyrannical, while the members of the slaveholding gentry are by nature lawful. As the example of Aaron Anthony shows, the slave system tends to transform the character of the members of the slaveholding gentry and to provoke them to the sort of unrestrained, brutish behavior that comes naturally to overseers. When he discusses Sophia and Thomas Auld, Douglass likewise stresses the impact of the slave system on the character of slave masters (see *Bondage*, 96–102, 142). For a similar line of argument relating to Douglass’s comparison of masters and overseers, see Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity*, 122.

36. Here I write “largely,” because I do not mean to imply that these are the only tactics the plantation regime uses to reduce human beings to a level with brutes (for example, using slaves as breeders, as Covey uses Caroline [see *Bondage*, 135] is another tactic). But I do think that Douglass emphasizes these tactics more than others, which is why I emphasize them.

37. Douglass, *Bondage*, 29.

38. *Ibid.*, 28, 38.

39. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 7.

40. Douglass, *Bondage*, 36.

41. *Ibid.*, 128–129.

42. Domination leads to, or gives rise to, the treatment of human beings as animals, but not because masters must in principle dominate slaves by treating them as animals (indeed, masters can dominate their slaves without so treating them, because they can dominate their slaves without ever exercising their power of arbitrary interference; on this point, see Pettit, *Republicanism*, 63–64). Rather Douglass’s view, again, is that the condition of domination—that is, the availability of the power of arbitrary interference—provokes masters to behave capriciously.

More exactly, it provokes them regularly to indulge their whims, and thus regularly to exercise their power of arbitrary interference in ways that lead them to treat their slaves as animals. Overseers likewise treat their slaves as animals, Douglass believes, because the brutal behavior to which masters must be provoked comes naturally to them and is not subject to constraint in situations where they enjoy the power arbitrarily to interfere in slaves’ lives.

43. Douglass suggests that the city slave is less subject to physical abuse than the “whip-driven” plantation slave. Still, as the example of Mrs. Hamilton shows, the city slave is hardly immune to such abuse (see *Bondage*, 93–95).

44. This is the title of chapter 15 of *Bondage*.

45. Douglass, *Bondage*, 136.

46. *Ibid.*, 137–138.

47. *Ibid.*, 136.

48. *Ibid.*, 149–150. For a compelling argument that *Bondage* narrates the fight with Covey in a low mimetic, comic mode, see William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 282–288.

49. Douglass, *Bondage*, 149.

50. *Ibid.*, 151.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, 138.

53. See David Van Leer, “Reading Slavery: The Anxiety of Ethnicity in Douglass’s *Narrative*,” in Eric Sundquist, ed., *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 121. Although Van Leer’s essay focuses on Douglass’s 1845 *Narrative*, much of his argument applies equally well to *Bondage*. I owe to Van Leer’s essay my understanding of Douglass’s use of the conversion narrative to depict the fight with Covey in *Bondage*.

54. Douglass, *Bondage*, 151.

55. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” in Stephen E. Whicher, ed., *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 162.

56. Douglass, *Bondage*, 151.

57. See Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” 149. Nathan Huggins has also stressed Douglass’s affinity to Emerson. See Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Slave and Citizen: The Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980), 44–46.

58. Here I differ with Bernard Boxill, whose most detailed discussion of the fight with Covey argues that Douglass was moved to fight Covey not by an aversion to domination, but by the recognition of a duty to “to stand up for the principles of morality,” specifically, to stand up “for his rights.” Two considerations count against this interpretation. The first concerns the internal consistency of Boxill’s account. Boxill takes seriously Douglass’s claim that the fight with Covey revived his “crushed self-respect.” But it is hard to see how Covey’s abuse could have truly crushed Douglass’s self-respect in the first place if, like Boxill, one holds that, despite such abuse, Douglass retained his belief that he was a human being with rights, a belief that would have yielded him some measure of self-respect (in his discussion of the impact of the fight on Covey, Boxill seems to maintain that

seeing an individual—thus, seeing oneself—as a human being with rights is tantamount to according her at least a “grudging respect”). The second consideration is Douglass’s suggestion, in the chapter after the one describing the fight with Covey, that Covey’s abuse deprived him of “all just ideas of his natural position” and that he regained a “clear conception of rights” only after the fight. See Bernard R. Boxill, “The Fight with Covey,” in Lewis Gordon, ed., *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 286–290; and Douglass, *Bondage*, 161–162. In a different essay, Boxill offers a briefer reading of the fight that is closer to my interpretation. For example, he argues that the ultimate cause of Douglass’s decision to fight was his desire for liberty, a desire I have described as Douglass’s aversion to domination (the immediate cause, claims Boxill, was the desire to avoid pain). Moreover, he now seems to recognize that, due to Covey’s abuse, Douglass lost sight of his rights, only to regain that awareness after the fight. See Bernard R. Boxill, “Radical Implications of Locke’s Moral Theory: The Views of Frederick Douglass,” in Tommy L. Lott, ed., *Subjugation and Bondage* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 39, 45–46.

59. Douglass, *Bondage*, 151–152.

60. Here I follow Pettit in using “arbitrary power” (of interference) and “power of arbitrary interference” synonymously. An act is arbitrary in this usage “by virtue of the controls—specifically, the lack of controls—under which it materializes, not by virtue of the particular consequences to which it gives rise.” See Pettit, *Republicanism*, 55.

61. Douglass’s strategy for effecting a limit to domination—in this case, Covey’s power to interfere with him on an arbitrary basis—corresponds, roughly, to what Pettit calls “the strategy of reciprocal power.” It is a strategy of defending himself against a dominator’s interference with his affairs in order to reduce what Pettit calls “the intensity of domination.” On these points, see Pettit, *Republicanism*, 57–58, 67–68. For a detailed, historical introduction to and philosophical defense of the interpretation of freedom as nondomination, see Pettit, *Republicanism*. For a valuable analysis of the important connections between domination and dependence, and implicitly between nondomination and independence, see Pettit, “Keeping Republican Freedom Simple,” 341–342. See also Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 70–77.

62. Here I reject Boxill’s view that Douglass could not have meant what he says, namely, “that resisting Covey made him unafraid to die.” As evidence for this view, Boxill cites Douglass’s assertion that life is “precious” to all human beings and “not lightly regarded by men of sane minds” (Douglass, *Bondage*, 173). Assuming that the fear of death involves the wish not to die, Boxill holds that this assertion commits Douglass to the claim that, after the fight with Covey, he too wished not to die “given that he did not think that at the time he was no longer of sane mind.” But is Boxill right about this? I agree that, after the fight, Douglass did not believe that he was no longer of sane mind. Even so, it is not absurd to suppose that he believed that human beings can have experiences that alter their sense of life’s comparative worth and lead them to revalue their wish not to die. Even if, as a general rule, “sane minds” wish not to die, it remains plausible that extraor-

dinary events, like the fight with Covey, will occasionally prompt them to recognize that other goods—in Douglass’s case, enforcing his commitment to resist flogging—matter so much to them that the preciousness of life pales in comparison. Douglass arrives at this insight with no sacrifice of sanity, for fighting moves him to see that preserving his integrity—in essence, protecting the projects and attitudes with which he most closely and profoundly identifies—requires that he preserve his opposition to flogging, not that he preserve his life when it is subjected to flogging. In effect, he discovers that, relative to other considerations, his life and satisfying his wish not to die matter a good deal less to him than he thought they did. See Boxill, “Fight with Covey,” 286–287. The notion of integrity I invoke here derives from Bernard Williams’s essay “A Critique of Utilitarianism,” in J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams, eds., *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 108–118.

63. Douglass, *Bondage*, 109.

64. See *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), first entry under “fact.” Jane Austen’s entire sentence (*Emma*, vol. 2, chap. 12) is “Enscombe however was gracious, gracious in fact, if not in word.” Let me be clear that I do not suppose that Douglass’s use of “fact” to refer to action is the only use of “fact” evident in his writing. I do suppose, however—here, and in the main body of the present chapter—that he like Austen relies on a conventional, English-language distinction between actions (deeds), on one hand, and speech and/or writing (words) on the other; see *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, entry 1.1.a., under “Action.” Even so, I hardly wish to deny that he knew, in J. L. Austin’s felicitous phrase, “How to do things with words.” Having learned to read by studying *The Columbian Orator*, and having begun his abolitionist career as a Garrisonian moral suasionist, Douglass was all too aware of what, after Austin and John Searle, we have come to call “speech acts.” And he was especially and famously adept at the deployment of what Austin dubbed “perlocutionary utterance.” In sum, I suppose that Douglass (again, like Jane Austen) believed that one could cogently speak of actions, or facts, as distinct from words, with the convention-based understanding that the actions one had in mind were nonverbal (as when he expresses concern about Lincoln’s failure to limit the exposure of colored troops to capture by rebel soldiers: “[Lincoln] was silent . . . but charity suggested that being a man of action rather than words he only waited for a case in which he should be required to act”; see Douglass, *Life and Times*, 345), and without in any way repudiating the moral suasionist’s assumption that speech indeed does act and can bring about valuable moral effects.

65. In contrast to Willett, Boxill, and most other interpreters of *Bondage*, I deny that Douglass invokes the distinction between “fact” and “form” to describe the difference between “inside” and “outside” views of the self, or between a mental and a physical freedom. As far as I can see, neither account can be easily squared with Douglass’s earlier references to the differences among being someone’s slave “in fact,” being someone’s slave “in form,” and being someone’s slave “in law.” See Cynthia Willett, *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 149; and Boxill, “Fight with Covey,” 285. Support for my interpretation can also be found in *Life and Times*, when Douglass recounts his

visit to one of his old masters, Thomas Auld, "after a period of more than forty years." Before he describes his meeting with Auld, Douglass writes at length of the "conduct" and the "deeds" through which "to me Captain Auld had sustained the relation of master" (emphasis mine). And he writes that "traveling the length and breadth of this country and England," he once upon a time had held up Auld's conduct to "the reprobation of all men who would listen to my words." But when Douglass recalls his feelings during his visit to Auld, he writes that "the conditions were favorable for remembrance of all his good deeds, and generous extenuation of all his evil ones. He was *to me* no longer a slaveholder either *in fact or in spirit*, and I regarded him as I did myself, a victim of the circumstances of birth, education, law, and custom" (emphasis mine). The last sentence I quote here is wholly consistent with and supports my interpretation of "in fact" in *Bondage*, for again it shows Douglass using that phrase to refer to deeds and, more precisely, to assert that while Auld had long ago through his deeds (both good and evil) sustained the relation of master to him ("to me"), Douglass no longer through his deeds sustains that relation to him ("He was to me no longer a slaveholder"). I am assuming, of course, that because this last sentence comes at the end of a paragraph wherein Douglass represents the relation of master, or slaveholder, exclusively in terms of his master's deeds, it is natural to interpret "in fact" to mean "in deed"—in fact, it is quite difficult to see, in this context, how else plausibly to interpret it. Finally, because Douglass distinguishes between being a slaveholder in fact and being a slaveholder in spirit, it is quite reasonable to doubt Boxill's and Willett's assumption that when he uses the phrase "in fact," here or elsewhere, he has in mind an "inner" or "mental" state. See Douglass, *Life and Times*, 440–441.

66. Douglass, it seems, takes for granted that fighting to the point of risking one's life is sufficient to secure limited freedom. But as Derrick Darby has pointed out to me, this need not be the case. A slave could fight, risk his life, but then lose the fight, be bound by his overseer, and then flogged. Having been bound, he then would be powerless to resist the flogging.

67. Douglass, *Bondage*, 63.

68. I assume that Douglass uses "honor" and "respect" more or less synonymously. As I read Douglass, he held that all human beings deserve respect, because all possess natural rights in virtue of which they deserve respect (for Douglass's reference to the just and inalienable rights of man, see *Bondage*, 165). Consistent with this belief, Douglass's discussion of dignity suggests that a slave will not receive the respect he or she is due (either from herself or from others) unless she manifests dignity through her resistance to domination. Douglass may have held that slaves' failure to resist domination and thus to demonstrate dignity explains the public's toleration of slavery. For a discussion and criticism of this view, see Boxill, "Fight with Covey," 288.

69. It may also be the case that Douglass motivates Covey to respect him, as Boxill suggests. Pace Willett, however, I see no evidence in the text for the claim that the desire for Covey's respect, or recognition, motivates Douglass to fight him. See Boxill, "Fight with Covey," 288–289; Willet, *Maternal Ethics*, 141–143, 174.

70. See Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto 2, stanza 76. Pace Boxill, a reading of the entire stanza makes it clear that Byron has in mind physical,

not mental freedom (compare Boxill, "Fight with Covey," 276). In any case, Byron's assertion that hereditary bondsmen will not be free unless they themselves "strike the blow" is plausible if one assumes that slave masters will not voluntarily free their slaves and that slaves will be reenslaved by those (other than themselves) who free them. There may be exceptions to Byron's claim, but they are not so numerous as to render it obviously absurd.

71. I do not mean to deny here that the founding fathers saw nonverbal action as indispensable to their revolutionary endeavors, or to claim that Douglass regarded their revolutionary enterprise as wholly or even primarily "verbal." And by emphasizing the verbal character of the 1776 Declaration, I am not asserting that Douglass saw that document as "only" or "merely" words, as if to suggest somehow that the founding fathers did not regard their words as giving an important justificatory basis for nonverbal (e.g., military) actions. Rather my point, simply, is that Douglass's declaration, though it is not a verbal declaration, may still be judged to be a declaration. I should add, finally, that recent philosophical discussions of declarations of independence have concerned the thesis that written declarations of independence seem to be at once "performative" and "constative"—see, e.g., Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 15 (1986): 7–15; and Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 104–109. Because Douglass's declaration is a declaration in deed, and not in word, I am suggesting that it is simply performative.

72. Here I cite the first paragraph of the 1776 American Declaration of Independence.

73. In *Bondage*, Douglass's narration of events preceding the fight with Covey—specifically, his appeal to Thomas Auld—also suggests a parallel to the founding fathers. Douglass's July 5 speech of 1852 emphasizes that the founding fathers rebelled after "they saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness, and scorn" (see Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" 362). Similarly, the presentation of the appeal to Auld in *Bondage*, in contrast to the presentation of that appeal in the 1845 autobiography, describes Auld as becoming "cold," suggests that he seemed "indifferent" after he repressed his feelings, and mentions that he abused Douglass with a "passionate condemnation" (see Douglass, *Bondage*, 142). By representing his travails as mirroring those of the founders, Douglass reinforces the suggestion that he aspires to refound and reconstitute the American nation.

74. Douglass, *Bondage*, 161–162.

75. In explicating Douglass's picture of plantation politics, I do not take myself to be explicating Douglass's intermittent use, or uses, of the term "politics," as, for example, when he writes that from the slave plantation "religion and politics are alike excluded . . . [t]he politician keeps away, because people have no votes, and the preacher keeps away, because the people have no money" (*Bondage*, 45–46). Rather I take myself to be explicating an account, a concept, of politics that Douglass articulates through his narrative depictions of his life as a slave and a free man. Many thanks to Jack "Chip" Turner for directing my attention to the passage just cited. For a detailed discussion of the thesis that narratives can articulate con-

cepts—that they can exhibit received concepts and even invent and present new ones (in the manner, say, of Kant's productive imagination in the formation of pure judgments of taste), see Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 10–14.

76. Douglass, *Bondage*, 124.

77. *Ibid.*, 164, 171.

78. In this chapter, my use of the distinction between descent and consent draws inspiration from Werner Sollors's discussion of this distinction. The related distinction between filiation and affiliation draws inspiration from Edward Said. See Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), esp. 6, and Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 1–30.

79. Douglass, *Bondage*, 43.

80. For an excellent discussion of the figure of the circuitous journey in European literature and philosophy, see M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), esp. 169–195.

81. Douglass, *Bondage*, 111.

82. *Ibid.*, 165.

83. Here, and in much of what follows, my discussion of the “plantation politics” Douglass depicts in chapters 18 and 19 of *Bondage* owes a profound debt to the path-breaking work of William Andrews and Eric Sundquist. Although my reading of these chapters differs in many significant respects from theirs, I am also, in many ways, building on their insights (see Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*, 214–239, and Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 112–134). I should like to stress, moreover, that in highlighting the consensual/affiliative character of Douglass's picture of collective action, or action-in-concert, I mean to be stressing its nonbiological, non-descent-based character, and not at all to be suggesting that the property of being consensual is a property that suffices to distinguish action-in-concert from the practice of rule (as the example of representative government shows, rule can also be based on consent).

84. For Shakespeare, the bonds binding the band are also affiliative: “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. / For he today that sheds his blood with me / shall be my brother” (4.3.60–62), emphasis mine. For my understanding of the political force of these lines, which derive from King Henry's famous Crispin Day Speech, I am indebted to Robert Lane's essay, “‘When Blood Is Their Argument’: Class, Character, and Historymaking in Shakespeare's and Branagh's *Henry V*,” *ELH* 61, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 28–32.

85. Douglass, *Bondage*, 216. By emphasizing that he presents himself and his co-conspirators as discursively expressing their shared concern for the world they inhabit, I mean to suggest that Douglass, notwithstanding his reliance on the rhetoric of fraternity, depicts his involvement with his fellows as exhibiting the spirit of the political virtue that Hannah Arendt has called “friendship.” See, in this connection, Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 3–31.

86. Here, then, my view is similar to that of William Andrews, who suggests

that Douglass's leadership of his Freeland band grows out of a broader context of political activity characterized by mutual self-reliance and a lateral distribution of power. According to Andrews, “This fraternal instead of paternal relationship between leader and followers stuck in Douglass's mind as an unprecedented model of home. Paternalism tended to fragment the slaves' faith in their peers in favor of the cultivation of their immediate superiors and inferiors. But the fraternalism of Douglass's Freeland band distributed power laterally, not vertically, so that authority could not abuse community. The mutual self-reliance of these black men cemented them into a unity of identity and purpose that liberated Douglass from mere individuality.” See William Andrews, “Introduction to the 1987 Edition,” in Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), xxi–xxii. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that Douglass did not always seem to adhere to a decentralized, fraternal conception of politics. In one version of the “Pictures and Progress” speech that he delivered in 1861, he contended that “the few think, the many feel. The few comprehend a principle, the many require illustration. The few lead, the many follow”—quoted in Waldo Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 264. For a brief account of the various versions of this speech that Douglass delivered in 1861, see *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, vol. 3, ed. John Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 452. For Douglass's description of his activities as an instigator, see *Bondage*, 168, 170–171. For the distinction between leaders-as-rulers and leaders-as-initiative-takers, see the Introduction as well as Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2003), 46–48.

87. My colleague John McCormick has suggested to me that Douglass's depiction of his transactions with his Freeland band of subversives illustrates a practice of democratic self-rule, not, as I interpret it, a practice of politics without rule. But I am not persuaded by this suggestion, for it seems to me that Douglass's explicit emphasis on mutual “commitment” and “pledging” (see, e.g., *Bondage*, 171, 176) better corresponds to what Hannah Arendt has described as a “limited sovereignty” achievable through “the force of mutual promise” than to the idea of a group, or a people, that, having forged a collective or general will, exercises that will to command itself. On this point, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 221, 245. For the critically important insight that the distinction between politics as action-in-concert and politics as rule cuts across the distinction between the few and the many, see Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1965), 279–280. I briefly touch on this point in Chapter 1.

88. Here I mean for the concept of political solidarity to capture identification between group members, shared values or goals, mutual trust, and mutual loyalty—thus all the features that Tommie Shelby mentions in his excellent discussion of that concept. See Tommie Shelby, “Foundations of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression,” *Ethics* 112 (January 2002): 236–239.

89. Douglass, *Bondage*, 147.

90. See *ibid.*, 181.

91. Van Leer, “Reading Slavery,” 126. The argument I develop in the next few

pages, that *Bondage* refuses romantic political expressivism, has strong affinities to Briallen Harper's argument that Harriet Beecher Stowe's romantic racialism comes under attack throughout the book. See Briallen Harper, "The Bondage of Race and the Freedom of Transcendence in Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*," *Postgraduate English* 4 (September 2001): 1-12.

92. Van Leer, "Reading Slavery," 125.

93. Douglass, *Bondage*, 146-147.

94. *Ibid.*, 149.

95. *Ibid.*, 151. Cf. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*, 285-286, and John Pittman, "Douglass's Assimilationism and Anti-Slavery," in Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland, eds., *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 68.

96. Here it should also be noted that while Douglass, like Du Bois, acknowledges the power of the slave songs to express the suffering of the slave, and to engender sympathy for that suffering, he declines to propose either (1) that they express the distinctive spiritual identity of the black slave (in fact, Douglass claims to have heard similar songs, characterized by the same "wailing notes," in Ireland), or (2) that effective, emancipatory black political action must expressly heed and promote the message conveyed in those songs. See Douglass, *Bondage*, 65. For a general discussion of Douglass's ambivalence with respect to the political significance of slave culture generally, and the slave songs specifically, see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 105, 127-130.

97. For the suggestion that the question of legitimacy is "concomitant" to the notion of rule, see Arendt, *Human Condition*, 228. It should be noted, however, that Arendt offers a rather different view in her essay "On Violence," where she writes that power, which she understands as action-in-concert, "needs no justification . . . what it does need is legitimacy." See Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 151.

98. The line of argument I develop in this paragraph is largely inspired by Hannah Arendt's discussion of promising as the source of a limited sovereignty corresponding to an action-centered notion of politics (see Arendt, *Human Condition*, 236-247, esp. 244-245). For Arendt, the faculties of promising and forgiveness are closely connected, and establish for politics a "diametrically different set of guiding principles from the 'moral standards' inherent in the Platonic notion of rule" (Arendt, *Human Condition*, 237). Douglass too seems to connect the two faculties, if only implicitly, and all too briefly, when, after suggesting that Sandy betrayed the band of brothers, he seems to forgive him, writing "and yet, we could not suspect him. We all loved him too well to think it possible that he could have betrayed us" (Douglass, *Bondage*, 181). For a valuable treatment of Arendt's analysis of the faculties of forgiving and promising, see Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb, *Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Messianism in Hannah Arendt and W. H. Auden* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 151-156.

99. See, in a similar vein, Ronald Sundstrom's claim that "although Douglass disfavored racial organizations, he thought it was necessary for African Americans to organize and unify to fight against slavery and racial prejudice, and to struggle for justice . . . for Douglass, this political organizing and unification was not to

be for reasons of race or culture, but strictly for political reasons." See Ronald Sundstrom, "Frederick Douglass's Longing for the End of Race," *Philosophia Africana* 8, no. 2 (August 2005): 152.

100. Although Douglass's defense of the formation of a racially exclusive cohort may well be taken to raise issues similar to those raised by his defense elsewhere of complexional institutions, I do not address those issues here. For an insightful discussion of Douglass's endorsement of complexional institutions, and the suggestion that that endorsement sits uneasily with his "assimilationism," see Howard McGary, "Douglass on Racial Assimilation and Racial Institutions," in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, ed. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 50-63. For a further discussion of assimilationism, and the suggestion that in at least one significant sense of the term Douglass is not an assimilationist, see my interpretation of Douglass as a radical reconstructionist in the present chapter.

101. As bizarre as it may seem to suggest that black slaves could act together to support slaveholder tyranny, Douglass invites such speculation when he tells us that not even Sandy, who had strong ties to African beliefs and rites, had wholly freed himself from the slaveholding priestcraft (which Douglass represents as asserting that God is the author of slavery, that running away is an offense against God, and so on). In fact, by tying Sandy to the slaveholding priestcraft, Douglass suggests an interpretation of Sandy's political agency that is different than the one he suggests (and that I have emphasized in this chapter) when he connects Sandy to African divination practices. See Douglass, *Bondage*, 168.

102. See Bonnie Honig, "Towards an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 226-232. For a similar line of argument, see Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 103-112.

103. For a more detailed discussion of the distinction between the condition of being black and the activity of interpreting and assigning significance to that condition, see Robert Gooding-Williams, "Race, Multiculturalism, and Democracy," in Robert Gooding-Williams, *Look, A Negro! Philosophical Essays on Race, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), esp. 92-97.

104. See C. Wright Mills, "The Professional Ideology of Social Pathologists," *American Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2 (September 1943), esp. 169. For an account of the connection of the sociology of disorganization to contemporary discussions of the black underclass, see Adolph Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), chapter 6, 187.

105. In stressing the republican dimensions of Douglass's political thought here and elsewhere, I intend neither to deny Douglass's "liberalism" nor to imply, as do some neo-republicans like Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner, that republican and liberal political thought can always be clearly and sharply distinguished. An interesting symptom of the difficulties here, as Charles Larmore shows, is Pettit's placing of John Locke—a founder of the liberal tradition, who, like Douglass, conceptualizes freedom as nondomination—among the republicans (see Pettit, *Republicanism*, 40). For an important account of Douglass's political thought that places

him within the American liberal tradition, and that highlights both his affinities with and differences from Locke, see Peter C. Myers, *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth of American Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008). For Larmore's valuable discussion of Pettit, which emphasizes that "the liberal tradition is not all of a piece," and which disputes Pettit's claim to have broken with that tradition, see Charles Larmore, *The Autonomy of Morality* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chapter 7.

106. Douglass, *Bondage*, 119.

107. Thus re-founding is a matter of reiterating the sort of action—in this case the founders' action of committing themselves to the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence—that initially founded the nation. I develop this point further in my brief discussion of the Roman antecedents of Douglass's view.

108. The reading of Douglass's speech that follows has been strongly influenced by David Blight's interpretation. See David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 74–77.

109. For the passages cited in this paragraph, see Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" 360, 361, 366, 364, 367, 371, 383.

110. For a similar interpretation, see Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 90–92.

111. In *Life and Times* (389), Douglass similarly understands hypocrisy as a contradiction between what is professed and what is intended, or wished.

112. For the passages cited in this paragraph, see Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" 365, 369, 364, 383, 368. According to Bernard Boxill, antislavery black moral suasionists held that the American nation's founding documents gave it a "common conscience" and so took their own task to be to persuade the nation to live up to its conscience. In Douglass's case, this meant persuading white slaveholding citizens to bring their (proslavery) professions into accord with the demands of their conscience. See Bernard R. Boxill, "Fear and Shame as Forms of Moral Suasion in the Thought of Frederick Douglass," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 714, 717. It seems to me, however, that Boxill's analysis cannot explain Douglass's speech of July 5, 1852, for, as I have been arguing, a central thesis of the speech is that the antislavery common conscience of the founding fathers is not the common conscience of his white contemporaries, their pretenses to the contrary notwithstanding. As I read him, Douglass invokes the authority of the founding fathers to persuade his white contemporaries to make the common conscience of the founding fathers their own (to exchange their proslavery conscience for the founding fathers' conscience) and thereby to acquire a conscience whose demands accord with the principles and ideals they profess.

113. Arendt, *On Revolution*, 209.

114. Here I conjecture that Douglass's notion of political innovation as re-founding may be the key to explaining the paradox that Frank Kirkland interestingly identifies in his analysis of Douglass's political thought: namely, Douglass's

apparent commitment to the view that there can be a form of morally informed political action that at once preserves an extant political culture and institutes a wholly new political culture. See Frank Kirkland, "Enslavement, Moral Suasion, and Struggles for Recognition: Frederick Douglass's Answer to the Question 'What Is Enlightenment?'" in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, ed. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 283–284.

115. On the relation between moral failing (e.g., the collapse of *virtù*) and political decline in the tradition of republican political thought, see C. H. Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 79–87, and Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1: *The Renaissance* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 75–180. Douglass's Roman, republican thinking persists in *Life and Times* when, in explaining his escape from slavery to a former master (Capt. Auld), he quotes Brutus's famous words from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (3.3.21–22), writing that "I did not run away from *you*, but from *slavery*; it was not that I loved Caesar less, but Rome more." And explicitly invoking the Roman concept of political innovation, as Arendt analyzes it, he describes Lincoln's second inaugural address as the president's attempt to "restore [the Republic] to its enduring foundations." See Douglass, *Life and Times*, 443, 362.

116. Du Bois, *Souls*, 146–147, emphasis mine. Here I take Du Bois to be suggesting that, with each generation, southern white citizens come to feel more and more that there is such a contradiction and that they come to feel this because (1) there is in fact such a contradiction, and (2) their honesty and generosity lead them to see that there is in fact such a contradiction.

117. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 1–25.

118. For Myrdal as an anomaly theorist, see Charles Mills, *Blackness Visible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 132, 146.

119. Here, then, I am not denying that there are other senses of "assimilationism" in which Douglass could correctly be judged to have been an assimilationist. According to Bernard Boxill, assimilationism is the thesis that a colorblind society is both possible and desirable in America. According to John Pittman, social assimilationism is the repudiation of an identity that is predominantly the effect of a system of oppression through the radical or revolutionary overthrow of that system (the sort of thing that Sartre envisions for Jewish identity in *Anti-Semite and Jew*). Douglass may well have been an assimilationist in Boxill's sense and an advocate of social assimilationism in Pittman's sense. See Bernard Boxill, "Two Traditions of African American Political Philosophy," *Philosophical Forum* 24 (Fall–Spring 1992–1993): 119, and John Pittman, "Douglass's Assimilationism and Antislavery," in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, ed. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 76–79.

120. But not otherwise, for otherwise the practices—specifically, the practice of slavery—would already have conformed to those norms. For a similar interpreta-



tion of Douglass's politics and, specifically, the July 5 speech, see George Shulman, *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 9, 16-18.

121. By denying that Douglass's July 5, 1852 speech presents an "anomaly" account of American racism, I am taking issue with Charles Mills's interpretation of that speech. If I am right that Douglass implies that American history has harbored powerful but divergent ideals and commitments, then perhaps we should see him as anticipating the "multiple traditions" view of American political culture that is currently associated with the work of Rogers Smith. For Douglass, the existence of potent but conflicting ideals suggests that racial politics will be an ongoing struggle over the soul of the nation. See Charles Mills, "Whose Fourth of July: Frederick Douglass and Original Intent," in Charles Mills, *Blackness Visible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 167-200. For Smith's defense of the multiple traditions view, see Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). For a more recent, programmatic statement in the same vein, see Desmond S. King and Rogers M. Smith, "Racial Orders in American Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 1 (February 2005): 75-92.

122. Douglass, *Bondage*, 45, emphasis mine.

123. The argument I sketch in this paragraph is largely indebted to Danielle Allen's essay "Invisible Citizens: Political Exclusion and Domination in Arendt and Ellison," in Melissa S. Williams and Stephen Macedo, eds., *Political Exclusion and Domination* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 29-76. See too Danielle S. Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since "Brown v. Board of Education"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 101-119.

124. Douglass's defense of the right to rebellion indicates his move away from his successful opposition to Henry Highland Garnet's call for an armed insurrection of slaves at the 1843 National Negro Convention and prefigures his defense of armed guerilla warfare geared to "drawing off the slaves to the mountains" in conversation with John Brown and Shields Green on the eve of the Harpers Ferry raid. For Douglass's account of his initial encounter with Brown, and of his later conversation with Brown and Green, see Douglass, *Life and Times*, 273-274, 319-320. For related commentary, see Michael G. Hanchard, "Racial Consciousness and Afro-Diasporic Experiences: Antonio Gramsci Reconsidered," *Socialism and Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1991): 83-106, and Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1-2.

125. Douglass's political thought is gendered, but I do not see that it is essentially gendered, or patriarchal, at least with respect to the key themes I emphasize: the concept of black politics he illustrates, his rejection of political expressivism, and his radical reconstructionism. In other words, there is nothing in these notions to imply that black politics must be, or must primarily be, a male enterprise.

126. Douglass, *Bondage*, 163.

127. *Ibid.*, 218, 216.

128. *Ibid.*, 220.

129. *Ibid.*, 220-221.

130. *Ibid.*, 216, 241.

131. Nathan Huggins also characterizes Douglass's break with the Garrisonians as a declaration of independence. See Huggins, *Slave and Citizen*, 42-44.

132. *Ibid.*, 237.

133. *Ibid.*, 168, emphasis mine.

134. *Ibid.*, 3-4, emphasis mine.

135. Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 76.

136. *Ibid.*, 87.

137. Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Post-socialist" Condition* (Routledge: New York, 1997), 81-82.

138. Douglass, *Bondage*, 240.

139. *Ibid.*, 238, 237.

140. *Ibid.*, 193, 213, 240.

141. *Ibid.*, 242-243.

142. Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" 385.

143. See Frederick Douglass, "The Dred Scott Decision: An Address Delivered, in Part, in New York, New York, in May 1857," in John Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 183.

144. Here, then, my view is in accord with John Pittman's claim that, upon his break with the Garrisonians, Douglass "came to see the interpretation of the Constitution as a field of political contestation. This decisive move strengthened rather than compromised Douglass's sense of the anti-slavery struggle as one between social systems or civilizations, that is, as one whose successful conclusion would involve a radical and complete rupture with the fundamental structures and relations definitive of the social situation in America from the 1840s on." See Pittman, "Douglass's Assimilationism and Antislavery," 79.

145. See Frederick Douglass, "The Negro Problem: An Address Delivered in Washington, D.C., on 21 October 1890," in John Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, vol. 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 436-456, and Frederick Douglass, "Lessons of the Hour: An Address Delivered in Washington, D.C., on 9 January 1894," in the same volume, 575-607.

146. Douglass, "The Negro Problem," 443.

147. All the material cited in this paragraph derives from Du Bois, *Souls*, 146-147.

148. All the material cited in this paragraph derives from *ibid.*, 147.

149. For all the material cited in the paragraph, see Douglass, "The Negro Problem," 443-444.

150. Douglass, "Lessons of the Hour," 602.

151. Douglass, "The Negro Problem," 447, emphasis mine.

152. *Ibid.*, 448.

153. Danielle Allen, "A Reply to Bader and Orwin," in *Political Exclusion and Domination*, ed. Melissa S. Williams and Stephen Macedo (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 179.

154. Douglass, "The Negro Problem," 445. See too Douglass, "Lessons of the Hour," 607.

#### 6. INHERITING DU BOIS AND DOUGLASS AFTER JIM CROW

1. The fundamental propositions framing Du Bois's early thought are, again: (1) that African American politics is a practice of group leadership—thus, a practice of group rule, or governance, for Du Bois interprets leadership as a form of rule, or governance, (2) that African American politics should take the form of political expressivism, such that it expresses the spiritual identity of the black folk, and (3) that African American struggles to counter white supremacy are best understood as struggles against social exclusion. Here and throughout the present book, I present Du Bois—in particular, the young Du Bois—as a theorist whose political thought is organized by these propositions. I do not mean to suggest, however, that Du Bois's political thought—early or otherwise—is without interest where it is not reducible to these propositions. Rather I aim to show that we can best appreciate the scope and nature of Du Bois's ongoing influence by seeing how his early thought hangs together as a coherent whole. In a similar vein, Adolph Reed suggests that his Du Bois scholarship has been motivated (at least in part) by his desire to think beyond the "interpretive frames" for thinking about black politics that the post-segregation era has inherited from Du Bois and from the segregation era more generally; see Adolph L. Reed, Jr., *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13, 181–184. For a different approach to Du Bois's political thought that concentrates less on the coherence of his outlook than on the significance of some of his insights and arguments for recent discussions of racial justice, see Lawrie Balfour's excellent forthcoming book *Democracy's Reconstruction: W. E. B. Du Bois in the Twenty-first Century*.

2. For the passages cited in this paragraph, see John Brown Childs, *Leadership, Conflict, and Cooperation in Afro-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 3–9, 148.

3. *Ibid.*, 14.

4. Childs does not mention Douglass, but finds exceptions to this tendency in the writings of George Ellis and Arturo Schomburg. And he argues that Marcus Garvey's UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) put "mutuality" into action on a global scale. See *ibid.*, chapter 4.

5. Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 19.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 131–145.

8. *Ibid.*, 89.

9. Unlike James, Childs sees that the distinction between vanguard and mutuality cuts across the distinction between elite intellectual and nonelite worker. In other words, he sees that elite intellectuals can embody the mutuality model (a point he explicitly makes) and that members of the working class can embody the

vanguard model (a point that is implicit in what he otherwise argues). See Childs, *Leadership, Conflict, and Cooperation*, 131.

10. Adolph Reed, Jr., "The Jug and Its Content," in his *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 18, 37.

11. *Ibid.*, 18–20.

12. According to Reed, uplift ideology "presumed a mass population that was by definition not capable of steering its own programmatic course or mobilizing on its own behalf." In the perspective of uplift ideology, he suggests, the rule of elites was required to mobilize such a population and to steer its action. See *ibid.*, 27.

13. *Ibid.*, 28.

14. For the material cited in this paragraph, see Reed, "The Jug and Its Content," 15–16, 33, 49.

15. For a similar point, see *ibid.*, 20.

16. See Adolph L. Reed, Jr., *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 33, 123–127; and Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963), 272.

17. Reed, "The Jug and Its Content," 22.

18. *Ibid.*, 50.

19. For discussion supporting the claim that debate, deliberation, and the formation of political alliances can lead to the transformation of preferences and needs-interpretations, see Cass Sunstein, *The Partial Constitution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), chapter 1, pp. 133–135, and Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Politics, the Central Texts: Theory against Fate*, ed. Zhiyuan Chi (London: Verso, 1997), 159–164.

20. Reed, "The Jug and Its Content," 18–28, 49.

21. For another recent, valuable attempt to expand our notion of black politics, see Michael Hanchard, *Party/Politics: Horizons of Black Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. chapters 1 and 2. Reed's effort to broaden our concept of black politics notwithstanding, he insists on excluding black popular culture from that concept. For a persuasive critique of Reed's position on this issue, see Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8–19.

22. Reed, "The Jug and Its Content," 35–37.

23. Ronald W. Walters and Robert C. Smith, *African American Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 69.

24. See Reed, "The Jug and Its Content," 18, and James Tully, "Political Philosophy as a Critical Activity," *Political Theory* 30 (August 2002): 535.

25. Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 35–42.

26. *Ibid.*, 35. For Dawson's suggestion that black publics have served as institutional fora for the practice of politics conceptualized in Arendtian terms—as men and women speaking and acting in concert—see *ibid.*, 53.

27. *Ibid.*, 322–323. For related lines of normatively inflected argumentation,