

**The Double Bind of Black Manhood: The Language of Masculinity in African  
American Writings, 1800-1900**

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THESIS

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For my parents, Richard and Sandra Kroll, who encouraged me to ask questions  
My husband, Benjamin McCombs, who sacrificed to make this dream a reality  
And my son, Theron James  
I dedicate this work

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## **SUMMARY**

This dissertation describes the contested vision of African American masculinity in the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionists, African American activists and Southern slaveholders. My project looks at the social and political battle over the meaning of African American masculinity from 1820 until 1890 through works of literature written by such authors as David Walker, William Whipper, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Chesnutt and Albion Turgée. In these texts, African American men participated in both self-fashioning and the performance of various visions of manhood while contending with the conditions created by both pro-slavery depictions of black inhumanity and abolitionist renderings of black victimhood.

## Introduction

This project was born out of my interest in non-violent direct action across various fields of inquiry – literature, rhetoric, and history. I have done considerable work on the use of non-violent, non-cooperation as a method of creating change and “speaking truth to power.” This form of activism has, I would argue, the capacity to empower the disenfranchised and oppressed by helping them to develop and fortify community solidarity and recognize the strength of their own personhood and, potentially, position<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, when motivated by a true desire to turn one-time enemies into allies, non-violent direct action has the ability to create a discourse that allows oppressors to recognize and admit their complicity in unfair power dynamics without being forced to accept humiliation, a tactic that can go a long way to prevent future retaliatory violence. What has continually captured my attention is the way in which this type of work redefines the power struggle and undermines the very structure that allows the powerful to ignore the consequences of their actions and condemns the disempowered to support their own oppression through hegemonic acquiescence. Those who criticize this strategy for playing into the hands of those in power, are often, I believe, confusing a refusal to engage in violence with true non-violent direct action. As I hope this dissertation makes clear, just because individuals choose not to engage in violence does not mean that they are doing the kind of activist work that could be described as non-violent direct action. While protests and awareness-raising are important, and often a component of non-violent direct action, they are, by themselves, insufficient to a true paradigm shift in the

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<sup>1</sup> By this I do not mean to argue that the oppressed are actually in possession of power greater than their oppressors –at least not directly – but, rather, I am referencing a concept originally expressed by Hegel in his Master/Slave Dialectic.

way that power is directed. Richard Attenborough had it absolutely correct when he had Ben Kingsely's Gandhi proclaim: "The function of a civil resistance is to provoke response and we will continue to provoke until they respond or change the law. They are not in control; we are" (*Gandhi*).

As I pursued this issue, I was impressed with the work of *satyagraha* (literally, truth power) in forcing the British Raj to reexamine its relationship to India. While critics of *satyagraha* might argue that Gandhi had his own blind spots when it came to both women and the untouchable class, it is fair to claim that as far as examples of successful non-violent direct action, the work done in India by *satyagrahas*<sup>2</sup> is preeminent. The study of non-violent direct action must take into account the manner in which this army of non-violent activists redefined the terms of engagement when it fought for Indian Independence. In looking at the work of these activists, it occurred to me that events staged by these individuals never attacked a particular government official or engaged in name-calling. Instead, they targeted unjust laws directly by participating in mass civil disobedience. The rhetoric surrounding these mass demonstrations was very specifically geared to make apparent the negative consequences of the law without devolving into personal attacks. Additionally, the *satyagrahas* took on those laws that most directly affected their well-being rather than choosing those laws that might have been a source of

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<sup>2</sup> This is the term given to the army of individuals who were engaged in non-violent civil disobedience or direct action. These individuals were trained, much as any army might train, to refuse to submit or stand down while also refraining from doing violence to any aggressors. This, as one might imagine, took considerable self-control and was practiced in various settings before engaging in direct confrontation in the field. Later, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee used many of the same methods to train protesters. Incidentally, Rosa Parks trained with SNCC long before she refused to give up her seat on the Birmingham City Bus.

potential public humiliation. Finally, the leadership for these actions came, not from the elite, but from those individuals who were most affected by the unjust system.<sup>3</sup>

With this as my starting place, I began looking for other moments when non-violent direct action was utilized by individuals and groups. When I enrolled in my MA program, I turned my attention to the antebellum fight to end slavery with the assumption that if there was ever a truly just war the Civil War was one. If ever non-violence had failed, and failed legitimately, this moment (as well as, potentially, the time leading up to World War II) was a place to begin to understand the limits of this kind of work. My MA thesis looked at the radicalization of Transcendentalist luminaries Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau in light of their understanding of the forces of nature. It argued, in essence, that because their vision of nature accepted the reality of violent change, they eventually moved from non-violence to violence in their fight against slavery; their philosophical underpinnings were always open to violent action even though they were both, in varying degrees, uncomfortable with violence. This work led me to ponder the limits of non-violence as well as the ways in which the work of nineteenth-century abolitionists was not truly non-violent by definition.

There is a very fine line between non-violent direct action and humiliating manipulation that can be easily crossed. And in creating a situation in which violence needs to confront itself, one runs the risk of doing a different kind of violence. As I studied non-violent direct action, I was surprised that many things that were described as

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<sup>3</sup> It may be argued that Gandhi, as a Kshatriya lawyer, was most definitely a member of the elite class. Gandhi, however, understood this and culled his local leadership from individuals most greatly affected by the rule of the British Raj. He also, before beginning the fight for Indian Independence, spent time touring the poorest areas of the country and meeting with individuals from all backgrounds, caste positions and perspectives. By doing this, he was able to find out, from those who were on the front lines, what were the most damaging aspects of British rule of India.

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non-violent were often far from it. Often times, while proponents of non-violence chose to avoid engaging in physical violence, the direct action taken was staged in such a way as to close down any space for true dialogue or even show the violence inherent in the system. Rather, these large displays of collective action have sometimes been staged in such a way as to humiliate or do psychic harm to the oppressor. One clear example of this was during the Vietnam War when protesters marched on the White House chanting “Hey, Hey LBJ; How many kids did you kill today?” This tactic, while drawing attention to the violence occurring because of the ‘police action’ in Vietnam, did not accurately reflect the political situation in the United States. While President Johnson had considerable power, he was not solely responsible for the Vietnam War. Engaging in the demonization of President Johnson rather than drawing attention to the power structures that allowed continued escalation to occur was, in my estimation, a failure of tactic in this particular situation. Other times, activists may engage in work that is nonviolent but it does not actually engage those in power and, consequently, cannot be considered direct action. In these cases, if the work of activists does not provoke power to responsive action, it is insufficient to be characterized as non-violent direct action.

One of my favorite examples of this comes from the work of Henry Ward Beecher, the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe. In an attempt to raise awareness of the horrors of slavery, Beecher held mock auctions to purchase the freedom of at least three slaves. These auctions, which took place in his church and included the trappings of the slave block, were attended by abolitionists and parishioners. Although this spectacle ensured the audience felt a sense of pride in their participation in such an event, the actual outcome of the event was far from damaging to the slave machine or the laws which

supported it. The women were released from bondage, to be sure, but only after they participated in Stowe's humiliating spectacle. In addition, by purchasing the freedom of these women, the abolitionists legitimized the legal and economic apparatus which held them bound. Certainly, it did not harm the system or force it to respond either in self-defense or through a change of law.

As I turned my eye to the work of so-called non-violent abolitionists of the nineteenth century, I was dismayed to realize that the work of moral suasion often fell under one of these two less effective categories. While not engaged in physical violence, the work of these abolitionists could not be considered truly non-violent as it both victimized slaves and free blacks while closing the door on any dialogue with the South. There were a couple of noticeable trends that played a part in the work of these activists that produced results that were, most probably, undesired by those engaged in the work. I make these observations acknowledging that hindsight is 20/20, and without any desire to demonize well-meaning men and women who committed themselves to an unpopular cause that was not their own. However, by understanding both the positive steps taken by these courageous men and women as well as their errors, we are in a better position to more effectively utilize the power of non-violent direct action in the future.

One of the first things that I noticed in doing this research was that the language of many abolitionists, especially Garrisonian abolitionists, was that of us verses them. These abolitionists desired to see themselves as "saviors on Mount Zion" and, consequently, demonized those who participated in slavery in any way. This is not to say that slavery had the potential for neutral good but, rather, to suggest that much of the rhetoric of abolitionists did not leave open the possibility of change among those they

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were wishing to convert. Through the use of name-calling and the rhetoric of religious damnation, these abolitionists created a situation in which those very individuals they wished to convert felt it necessary to defend their actions. This bolstered the emerging discourse of racist pseudo-science as well as created a market for defenses of slavery and the Southern way of life. Consequently, most of their rhetoric actually reached individuals not engaged in slavery, and, therefore, was unable to effect the greatest change. Much of the most emotionally charged language used by these authors and lecturers did little more than pat themselves on the back for their recognition of some higher law. More importantly, it also cut off the possibility of self-reflection, making it difficult for many abolitionists to recognize and remedy their own racism.

Due to their desire to see themselves as martyrs and saviors, many abolitionists envisioned themselves as working to free the poor, oppressed slave who could neither free him or herself, nor offer anything meaningful in return. This was not necessarily true across the board; there are some powerful exceptions that would prove the rule; however, it was the case often enough to cause discomfort to many African American abolitionists and to separate whites from the individuals they were attempting to help. It is this particular division that is of greatest interest to me, because it effectively demonstrates the need for non-violent direct action to be rooted within the community it benefits. It is very difficult, if not downright impossible, to engage in effective non-violent direct action when the work of organizing is controlled by members outside of the community being oppressed. This is not to say that support cannot come from outside the community; it should and needs to; however, those who understand the relationship of power from the inside are best positioned to effect the most lasting and powerful change.

One of the most powerful reasons why this needs to be the case is because the work of non-violent non-cooperation is actively engaged with redefining boundaries of community and power. The work of community-building and defining is an essential piece of this activism, and this work cannot be done by outsiders. Additionally, as this dissertation will demonstrate, when those who have been oppressed are not granted access to self-definition and the creation of their own public personae, communities trade one type of oppression for another. While this dissertation looks specifically at the response of African American men to the work of white abolitionists, it is hoped that the lessons learned from this dialogue can enhance understanding of the relationship between the oppressed and those that wish to participate in the fight for freedom as compassionate, and often privileged, outsiders.

To more fully illustration what non-violent direct action might look like, the example of the Salt March or the *Dandi Satyagraha* is useful. As part of an attempt to make money off of its India colony, Great Britain made it illegal for any Indian to produce salt without British consent. Instead the British *Raj* claimed this natural resource, held sole title to the production of this important food preservative, and then proceeded to sell it back to the Indian people with additional taxes. Seeing this as both an unjust law and an opportunity to show the British that they could not make laws for the Indian people, Gandhi and his fellow leaders, beginning with 78 people, organized a march to the Indian Ocean where eventually millions of Indians collected salt. This forced the British to make a decision: it could either ignore the protesters and in so doing show they had no right or ability to enforce the law; or they could begin a series of mass arrests that would strain their resources and call attention to their policies throughout the

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international community. Great Britain made the choice to begin making arrests, eventually arresting over 80,000 Indians. By doing so, they created martyrs out of everyday Indian citizen and a burgeoning independence movement coalesced.

This action was not just spectacle or propaganda, although it made good use of both. It was an action that forced those in power to choose to react in such a way as to define their position; it was effective because they were forced to do so in full view of the world. Additionally, the actions of these millions of Indians created in them a sense of their own self-determination and a realization of the power that they wielded. This is what was missing from the work of abolition in the nineteenth century, and it is what black abolitionists pointed to when they argued for more autonomy and greater respect within the progressive reform community.

While writing this, I have watched the issue of racial profiling and police brutality come to a head in the United States. Every evening, when I turn on the news, I am confronted with images of Black Lives Matter protesters standing toe-to-toe with police. Michael Brown Jr., Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Philando Castile and Alton Gray are just a few of the men who have made the news recently, murdered by police who seemed to fear their black manhood. I have heard individuals attempt to rationalize these murders by claiming that, although these stories are sad, if individuals choose not to respect the law (and, it is assumed, the police), these things happen. Setting aside the obvious argument that these things don't happen to white men who disrespect the law, the case of David Fry being an excellent example of this, there is the underlying belief that black men don't have the right to express frustration, anger, or, frankly, any emotion that is not palatable to those in authority. There also seems to be a real fear of black male action of any kind.

And the fear of both black male emotion and black male action has its roots in the antebellum period on both sides of the slavery question.

Under slavery, two narratives of black manhood emerged. The first was that of the content slave who flourished under the patriarchal order. In this telling of the relationship between master and slave, the male slave, not fully capable of managing the affairs of his own household, was guided and protected by a benevolent white man who, in exchange, gained the whole profit of the slave family's labor. Not manly enough to care for his own family, the slave was grateful for the assistance provided him by the slave master and returned the master's kindness with unwavering loyalty. The other narrative of slavery was, perhaps, a more sinister one, although not more destructive. In this story, slavery played the part of policing violent, half-animal, black men.<sup>4</sup> Without the important work of slave owners, and, perhaps more importantly slave drivers and roving gangs of white enforcers, black men would rise up, murder all the men in their sleep, rape the women, and burn the South to the ground. The policing nature of slavery protected white America from the animal in their midst. Interestingly, the work of white abolitionists also fits these renderings of black men. From one perspective, slaves were deserving of their freedom because they were gentle and kind (slavery was in this instance a form of abuse on a childlike creature). From another perspective, slaves should be granted their freedom because enslaving them meant risking bloody rebellion.

These two narratives placed black men in a precarious double bind.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, if they responded to the horror inflicted on them by the institution of slavery with righteous indignation, they ran the risk of being seen as vicious animals. On the other

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<sup>4</sup> Women were policed more on the basis of their reproductive traits as black women were believed to be especially lascivious.

<sup>5</sup> Much has already been written about the sexual double bind that women experienced.

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hand, if they did nothing, they gave evidence to the idea that blacks were accepting of their position. Consequently, any show of emotion, either positive or negative, was always already implicated in one of the master narratives of slavery. And in that, the real manhood of black men -- along with its experiences, emotions, and connections -- was lost.

By looking at the experiences and perspectives of African American male abolitionists, I hope to uncover a better understanding of how to effectively conduct non-violent direct action by taking seriously their criticism of it. Additionally, I hope that this study will help to reclaim the voices of those whose manhood, though unrecognized, was never lacking.

**Chapter I:  
Walker, Whipper and Douglass: The Language of “Martial Manhood” and  
“Respectable Manhood” in the Work of African American Abolitionists**

In 1845, Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave and Garrisonian abolitionist, published his first autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. In one of the more shocking incidents of the narrative, especially to a white Northern abolitionist community accustomed to the image of the supplicant slave, Douglass asserts his own strength and defends his person in a fistfight with the slave breaker, Covey. Scholarship has approached this moment as an example of Douglass’ desire to meld the need for physical self-defense with the more pacifist renderings of Garrison’s moral suasion. While choosing not to push too far on the limits of his readership’s sympathy, Douglass, as aptly explained by Eric J. Sundquist, exposed “the ideology of enslavement: to be punished was to be a slave, to resist punishment was to be free” (Sundquist, 109).<sup>6</sup>

This one moment, seemingly at odds with Garrisonian non-violence, has been interpreted through a variety of lenses. Many scholars have found, in this description, the beginnings of the rupture between Douglass and Garrison, and even a radical departure from Christianity. Zachary McLeod Hutchins, in “Rejecting the Root: The Liberating Anti-Christ of Douglass’s *Narrative*,” has engaged with the religious implications of Douglass’ description of the slave breaker Covey as both Satanic and a representation of Christ’s all watchful eye. As such, he declared that the fight with Covey demonstrates his rejection of “Paul, the Bible, and their mutual exhortations to Christ-like, passive suffering” (305). Meanwhile George Yancy’s analysis of this same scene argues that this is the precise moment of existential awakening when he comes to know that “he does not

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<sup>6</sup> This will be interesting when it comes to the Civil War and soldiering as the film “Glory” made clear.

possess an essence (Black Inferiority) that precedes his ex-istence [break] He refuses to see himself through the eyes of whiteness” (313).

While these versions of Douglass’ fight with Covey open up a perspective into the possible intellectual development that rooted this experience, others have looked at the larger emotional implications of Douglass’ choice to describe events as he did. One of the most compelling readings of this fight attempts to reconcile his apparent suggestion “that his manhood – his dignity and humanity – emerged not through literacy or labor or leadership but through violence” with Douglass’ concurrent argument against rebellion on the mass scale (Kohn, 500). Margaret Kohn does this impressively by linking her reading of this fight with Covey through the lens of Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic, eventually coming to the conclusion that ‘in choosing to risk death rather than endure bondage, Douglass felt himself to be free” (504). This reading is especially interesting because it offers a rendering of events that both takes seriously Douglass’ original commitment to Garrisonian moral suasion while also identifying the possible seeds of his eventual embrace of John Brown. This is viewed by many as the defining moment of liberation in Douglass’ life, co-equal with his learning to read. Scholarship, however, misses the ways in which Douglass’ rendering of events demonstrates that, even as a slave, he was, according to the various standards of manhood in currency during the moment, already the better man. He does this by describing the fight as one between two equals, rather than master and slave, while concurrently showing the ways in which Covey attempted to undermine the rules of the fair fight.

In attempting to understand how Douglass framed his discussion of this fight, it is important to understand a bit about the context in which the *Narrative* was written. As a

newly escaped slave, Douglass originally became involved with the Garrisonians and, consequently, committed to the use of moral suasion in the battle against slavery. One of the major consequences of the use of moral suasion was to emasculate male slaves by continually placing them in the position of supplicants to Northern whites; in a culture where rights were tied to masculinity, this was a failing that had long reaching consequences. Black abolitionists, including Douglass, wanted more than an end to the institution of slavery. They wanted to be granted access to all the rights, including voting and property ownership, which were part and parcel with full US citizenship. This meant that black men needed to be seen as more than victims, abused half-humans, or emasculated non-persons. Black men needed to be seen as both fully human and fully masculine in order to secure full citizenship in the United States in the nineteenth century. (Black women would also need to be viewed as more than victims, but the strict gender division that was enforced in nineteenth-century America made the consequences of their continued victimization quite different.) Moral suasion, as a tactic, eroded the possibility of gaining and/or retaining the vote for African American men as it fought for the end of slavery; it did so by constantly placing the image of the abused slave, bound and incapable of individual action, in the public eye.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, abolitionists might gain support for anti-slavery, but lose support for other equally important rights for black men, such as voting or property ownership.

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<sup>7</sup> The example of Harriet Beecher Stowe's brother, Ward Beecher, is a perfect example of this. By setting up mock slave sales, which were in fact not truly mock as he was, in fact, buying people out of slavery, he did little to actually damage the system that he was criticizing. It may have embarrassed the slave community but it did no real damage to their coffers. It also humiliated the slaves that it was attempting to help by parading them on a "mock" auction block. The real beneficiaries of this spectacle were the abolitionists who gained a feeling of being saviors to the poor black slave.

It is important to consider that Douglass, a relatively recent convert to Garrisonian abolition, was attempting to understand his experience of slavery through the lens of a new world view. Raised under the very patriarchal system of chattel slavery, Douglass was exposed to the culture of honor that pervaded the cult of Southern manhood. Part of that culture demanded that a man be able to protect himself while also maintaining the concept of a fair fight, the gentlemanly battle. Additionally, let it not be forgotten that Douglass, who had escaped enslavement, had learned from experience the importance of self-defense in physical and emotional safety. While Garrison had convinced him of the importance of non-violence in response to evil as part of a larger reform movement that would eventually abolish slavery, Douglas had to work through and balance these ideas with both his own experience and competing visions of what it meant to be a man.

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The first thing to note about Douglass' description of his fight with Covey is the way in which he attempted to avoid the fight at all costs. Rather than go head-to-head with Covey from the very beginning, Douglass did all manner of things to protect himself without resorting to physical violence. He asked his master to release him from his contract to Covey and place him with another driver. He turned to his fellow slave Sandy for support and advice, even taking to carrying a protective root that Sandy assured him would prevent further beatings. All the while, Douglass continued to do the work that Covey demanded of him to the very best of his ability without proper training or support. Douglass clearly demonstrates that he did not start the fight nor did he do anything to warrant Covey's anger; therefore, what follows after cannot be considered anything but a outright attack on his person.

Consequently, when Covey sneaked upon him in the stable as he was in the performance of his labors, Douglass had no choice but to submit to an unjust flogging or defend himself. It is clear from later renditions of this event that the fight was, in actuality, much more violent than Douglass describes it in the *Narrative*. Be that as it may, Douglass wanted, in this moment, to show how a form of non-violence could be joined with self-defense. He also wanted to demonstrate that he conformed to all the rules of justified self-defense in the persecution of a fair fight. One can choose to do no harm and still refuse to submit to the lash. He writes;

I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and, as I did so, I rose. He held onto me, and I to him. My resistance was so entirely unexpected, that Covey seemed taken all aback. He trembled like a leaf. This gave me assurance, and I held him uneasy, causing the blood to run where I touched him with the ends of my fingers.

(*Narrative*, 71)

In this passage there is a great deal of tension between Douglass's desire to assert himself and his respect for Garrisonian ideals. Note that Douglass, very firmly, contends that he did no real harm to Covey but rather used force to protect himself from the violence Covey wished to inflict upon him.<sup>8</sup> While not truly non-violent, Douglass did, according to his telling of events, have adequate strength to inflict real harm but made the decision not to.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, we later learn, not only did Douglass have the physical strength to do real damage to Covey, he had the desire to do so. In his later text, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, he recalls being taken over by the 'fighting madness' but, even still, he is

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<sup>8</sup> The idea of force is a tricky one. I must exert force when I protect myself from the violence of others even if I choose not to do violence in return. Merely by stopping them, I have exerted my will upon their actions. And this is force. So non-violence is not the lack of force but, rather, the utilization of force governed by a very specific set of conditions. Thus Steve York could accurately entitle his documentary on non-violence as "A Force More Powerful."

<sup>9</sup> Even Gandhi recognized that if one was not willing to die in defense of non-violence, that self-defense was preferable to cowardice.

able to maintain a level of clear-headedness that allows him to control his rage. There he writes:

The fighting madness had come upon me, and I found my strong fingers firmly attached to the throat of my cowardly tormentor; as heedless of consequences, at the moment, as though we stood as equals before the law. The very color of the man was forgotten. I felt as supple as a cat, and was ready for the snakish creature at every turn. Every blow of his was parried, though I dealt no blows in turn. I was strictly on the defensive, preventing him from injuring me, rather than trying to injure him. I flung him on the ground several times, when he meant to have hurled me there. I held him so firmly by the throat, that his blood followed my nails. He held me, and I held him.

(*My Bondage*, 145)

Importantly, this rage is not controlled because he fears the repercussions that would descend upon him if he seriously harmed a white man. Rather, he very clearly explains that this battle was between two equal men and that color was strictly forgotten. Instead, it is because he considers himself an equal to Covey that he demonstrates the marks of restraint and gentlemanly control.

The fight between the two men does not remain equal, however, as Covey calls his cousin Hughs to come to his aide.<sup>10</sup> Douglass successfully, in the rendering described in the *Narrative*, defends himself from this new enemy with a well-placed kick, doing only as much harm as necessary for self-defense, while continuing to hold Covey steady. In doing so, he proves that he is not only the stronger man but also the better man. He defends his masculinity but he does so in such a way as to maintain his manly honor and warrant respect for the damage he refused to do. The insertion of Hughs into the fight transforms the fistfight between men into an all-out-assault and Douglass's dispatch of him returns the fight to something respectable. It is Douglass who wishes for the fight to remain a contest of wills and strength between two men. Covey, however, is not content

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<sup>10</sup> It is from the text *My Bondage and My Freedom* that we learn of Hughs' relationship to Covey.

to fight fairly and calls for the help of another slave, Bill, who is nearby. After attempting to ignore the call of the slave breaker, “Bill said his master hired him out to work, and not to help to whip me; so he left Covey and myself to fight our own battle out” (*Narrative*, 74). In this last ditch attempt to skew the odds in his favor, it is confirmed that it is the black men who hold, as yet, untapped power on the farm. While perhaps a farcical rendering of non-violence, it also shows the true dynamic between master and slave by disrupting the image of patriarchal benevolence and willing, grateful dependence.

While clearly not a true example of non-violence, Douglass’s description represents an attempt to reconcile the need for a show of strength with a desire to do no harm. As such, it is a working out of something like non-violent direct action to slavery, and showing both the moral and physical strength of African American men who were routinely victimized by slavery.

Not long after the publication of *The Narrative*, the relationship between Douglass and Garrison began to strain. While there are many reasons for the break between Douglass and Garrison, the issue of moral suasion’s emasculating effect on black men has not been fully explored.<sup>11</sup> Much has been written about Douglass’s conversion to political abolition as the crux of this break; others have suggested that Douglass felt slighted by Garrison’s disinterest in him as a potential philosopher of abolition rather than merely an eyewitness to the horrors of the system. The suggestion that these two ideas might be connected through the way that moral suasion emasculated Douglass, at a time and place when that was detrimental to securing full rights, has not been broached. Much of the abolitionist work done by well meaning white abolitionists depended upon the idea of moral suasion. Moral suasion was not non-violent direct action

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter Two will develop this idea further.

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but, rather, an attempt to use the power of sentimentality to persuade those engaged in slavery to end the sale and exploitation of black labor voluntarily. By proving, through argument and appeals to emotion rather than action, that slavery was unjust and morally reprehensible, Garrisonians hoped that helping individuals to think and feel rightly would end slavery without resorting to violence. The use of sentimentality was considered the purview of women and, consequently, linked the work of abolition to the rhetoric of female moral rectitude. However, it was not as direct, nor as active as Douglass would have liked – a trait that was viewed as desirable in men – and consequently, his desire for more direct action grew, eventually separating him from his mentor, William Lloyd Garrison.

Douglass repeatedly claimed that Garrison and his fellow cohorts did not take him seriously as a man. He argued that he was asked to merely repeat his eyewitness account of slavery without commenting on the causes of slavery or the methods by which it should be abolished. This meant that although Douglass participated in the public sphere, he did so only at the approval of a white man. This, combined with the ways moral suasion emphasized the victimization of black bodies, created a situation in which Douglass, although male, was neither masculine nor manly. And this representation of his manhood kept him out of the public sphere in ways that were similar to the plight of nineteenth-century women. To be fully recognized as a man, in the nineteenth century, Douglass knew that he would have to secure the freedom to speak for himself. His break with Garrison was a painful one but one that he described as just as necessary as his fight with the slave breaker Covey. Scholar Waldo E. Martin Jr. writes “Whereas the victory over Covey represented a triumph over physical enslavement, the break with Garrison

and the Garrisonians represented a triumph over the mental enslavement of Garrisonian dogma. Even more important, both events represented benchmarks in his quest to come to grips with his black manhood” (Martin Jr., 47). Fighting Covey gave Douglass the freedom to think of himself as physically independent; breaking with Garrison allowed Douglass to be intellectually independent.<sup>12</sup> It also put Douglass in a position to define himself and his masculinity in terms of his own choosing. Notably Douglass does not move directly from Garrisonian moral suasion to the support of John Brown. After his break with Garrison, Douglass continued his work as an abolitionist while attempting, in his autobiographies and speeches, to define what black masculinity might look like. The break with Garrison gave Douglass the space to do this. It allowed him to ask the question, given that slavery is morally wrong, how should I, as both black and man, respond to those who wish to take away my freedom? Eventually, ostensibly supporting the work of John Brown, Douglass argued for strong black masculinity to show the world that the African American community had much to offer. However, his activism was balanced by the need to show the world that African American men were not the violent beasts they were so often portrayed as, but rather freedom fighters seeking justice.

Douglass’ attempts to navigate an appropriate masculine response to slavery were complicated by the double bind that black men found themselves in when expressing traditional forms of masculinity. If they supported violence, then they risked being called out as savages and animals. If they argued the path of moral suasion, they risked being seen as passive, unwilling to defend themselves and their families. Consequently, they were deemed deserving of enslavement as they were incapable of defending themselves

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<sup>12</sup> Eventually, Douglass and Garrison reconnected but, at this point, Douglass was able to stand as a man on his own terms.

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and their families without the support of white patriarchs. Politicians argued that slavery had provided the “providential transition from African barbarism to civilized emancipation” and as such it provided a positive good in the life of slaves (Ingersoll) while racist abolitionists claimed that through “colonization slave-holders will avoid both the moral corruption of black slaves and the preeminent possibility of slave revolts” (Hough). Their ability to act as civilized men challenged on every side, black men also had to confront divided sectional expectations defining manly behavior.

Susan Zaeske’s article “‘The South Arose as One Man’: Gender and Sectionalism in Antislavery Petition Debates” is an especially useful one for understanding the ways in which understandings of gender roles divided politicians from the North and the South. By looking at the ways in which various congressmen from different parts of the country responded to antislavery petitions from female activists, Zaeske demonstrates that the upper classes of the North and South were divided, not only on ideas about slavery, but also the ways in which gender should be expressed in the public and private spheres. Building on Amy S. Greenberg’s categories, Zaeske suggests that Northern congressmen, like Adams, defended the concept of “respectable manhood” while Southern firebrands were engaged in the defense of “martial manhood.” “Respectable manhood” could be attained by “demonstrating restraint, reliability, and a commitment to domestic and civic virtue.” Concurrently, in the North, where ‘respectable masculinity’ had gained a firm toehold, elite white masculinity was increasingly being understood as disembodied. The link between masculinity and citizenship, while it maintained a level of embodiedness through its link to militia service, rested on the strength of men to think and reason correctly. Women were overly emotional, overly hampered by the embodied nature of

motherhood while men were expected to learn how to set aside certain kinds of irrational emotion in order to reason clearly about the important matters of state. Looking at the masculinity defined and defended by congressional leaders is important for two reasons. One, as a participatory democracy, the masculinity asserted by leadership can tell us a lot about what was expected from men in the wider population. Second, as these were men who would be responsible for instituting changes in the law, their opinion was of great importance. This is not to say that there were not other popular concepts of masculinity; there most certainly were, and these will be referenced as they become instrumental in understanding the work of black civil rights activists. However, for the purpose of focusing this research, an understanding of elite masculinity will ground much of the analysis. Importantly, this was the kind of manhood that was most important for attaining the goal of equal rights under the law which was the long term goal for many African American activists.

“Martial manhood,” which was strongest in the South, was understood as valuing “the practices of dominance” and was “associated with strength, aggression, and even violence” (345). Lorri Glover and Craig Thompson Friend describe the link between manhood and honor among elite Southerners as the “Honor-Mastery Paradigm,” a world view that “prized landed independency, mastery over female, child, and slave dependents, the use of violence to enforce patriarchy, and the importance of honor to unite the South’s white male community” (Rindfleisch, 858). According to this rendering of elite white manhood, John Quincy Adams stood as the ideal of “respectable manhood”

and Andrew Jackson was the model of “martial manhood.”<sup>13</sup> Zaeske then goes on to connect the language of Southern honor with the performance of the duel. She writes: “the duel and the oration shared profound similarities in purpose, form and style. In Southern political culture, oratory, like dueling, was viewed as an opportunity for a ‘public display’ of character; thus eloquence was considered a core value in the politics of honor” (350-1). Consequently, debates in congress over such issues as the gag rule became a sparring contest as members attempted to defend their way of life as well as their understanding of manhood. Pushed into the corner by attacks on their honor, Zaeske argues, Southern congressman had, in their understanding of their role as men, no other recourse than defense of their way of life. While Zaeske’s article looks closely at the relationship of female-driven antislavery petitions and the response of Southern gentlemen, the ways in which “respectable manhood” and “martial manhood” were at odds with each other is useful in developing a rendering of the social situations in which African American abolitionists were thrust as they attempted to define themselves as men worthy of full citizenship and the franchise. Somehow, they had to either appease both groups or choose a side. Choosing a side meant potentially alienating oneself from either one’s support or one’s audience.

In addition to having the doors of public discourse closed to them, black men suffered from an overabundance of negative images regarding their worth. The rhetorical world in which African American abolitionists lived and worked was one fraught with demeaning images of black manhood. Even a brief survey of the work of white abolitionists during the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries produces an inordinate

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<sup>13</sup> The emphasis placed on “martial manhood” can explain why some Southern newspapers granted John Brown a modicum of respect when he went calmly to the gallows. This show of courage demanded respect even when exhibited by one’s foe.

amount of writing concerned with the way the suffering of slaves centered on and around the body. Saidiya V. Hartman has, very astutely, referred to this emphasis as ‘hyperembodiedness.’ Images of the physical beatings and degradation of both male and female slaves was ubiquitous within the literature of anti-slavery and abolition. The carnival-esque nature of the abolitionist movement displayed African American masculinity as a commodity available for public consumption. Hartman has argued that the sentimentalist use of the black body created a space for white imagining by building on the idea of the black body rather than the reality of the black personality. In discussing the writings of Rankin, an abolitionist, she astutely notes “Moreover, by exploiting the vulnerability of the captive body as a vessel for the uses, thoughts, and feelings of others, the humanity extended to the slave inadvertently confirms the expectations and desires definitive of the relations of chattel slavery. In other words, the ease of Rankin’s empathic identification is as much due to his good intentions and heartfelt opposition to slavery as to the fungibility of the captive body” (Hartman, 19). It quickly becomes clear, especially when Hartman’s analysis of abolition is paired with the work of such scholars as Orlando Patterson and, more recently, Edward E. Baptist, that African American faced the dissolution and negation of self at every turn.

Between the staging of mock auctions and the production of woodcut carvings of pleading black men, representations of African American masculinity put black men outside any known rhetoric of self-determined masculinity in the antebellum period. At best, black manhood could gain respect as an exceptional representation of his master’s will but this did not afford the autonomy necessary to secure franchise. By creating hyperembodied and commodified slaves, white men from both the [N]orth and [S]outh

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were able to enjoy a kind of intellectual disembodiedness. In his recent book, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, Edward E.

Baptist describes how the use of black bodies underpinned the world capitalist economy of the antebellum period. Through the use of torture as a mechanism for the extraction of efficient labor, Baptist argues that white men understood black “hands“ as an extension of their own bodies and strove to form them as such. Through this method, white beneficiaries of this work could enjoy the fruits of black physical labor while being, in large part, removed from the labor itself. Northern capitalists and Southern speculators who traded on the fruits of this labor both benefited from the ‘hyperembodiedness’ of blacks.

Additionally, while it is easy to see how “respectable manhood” might be viewed as a characteristic of mind or spirit rather than body, “martial manhood” also does if one considers the perfection this type of masculinity demanded. While this form of manhood was based on both intellectual and physical dominance, it was an immortal manhood that did not retain a space for either the aged or the injured. Given that no individual can indefinitely avoid either injury or aging, this kind of manhood was limited to a particular kind of embodiedness. While those injured in honorable battle or the respectably aged were granted a kind of honor, it was not the ideal of “marital manhood.” Consequently, this vision of “unembodied manhood” suggests some of the reasons why the embodied nature of black manhood, as it was described in both pro-slavery apologia and abolitionist propaganda, would be such a threat to the nation’s burgeoning understanding of the ideal male citizen.

By rhetorically structuring the black experience as one of victimhood in the public eye, white abolitionists created a situation in which the Southern elites, driven as they were by “martial manhood” were unlikely to recognize the manhood of their black slaves. They might, through depictions of suffering, come to recognize their own white inhumanity, but that did not mean that they would come to see black men as equals. Rather, this created a situation in which the paternalistic nature of slave owners would take over as they could then argue that black men were unable to defend themselves in the white world. This also set up a situation in which those who accepted the rhetorical structure of “respectable manhood” could envision their relationship to blacks as that of savior or redeemer. This articulation also left black men outside of the rhetoric of masculine citizenship and franchise. Black abolitionists recognized this double bind and struggled to work within and without of the confines of the abolitionist movement to create a black public ideal that could participate in the democracy of men that had developed in United States.

As if a final nail in the coffin of black masculinity, Edward E. Baptist has outlined how the strengthening of the interstate slave trade, after the prohibition on the transatlantic slave trade, created a situation in which blacks were forcibly separated from all familial and community connections. This separation of individuals from community coupled with the factory-style farming of the large cotton plantations created a loss of traditional markers of individuality. For example, slaves who had claimed family relations as part of their identity (father, husband) lost that marker. Additionally, those who had some particular skill such as blacksmith or brick maker became, instead, merely a “hand” out in the cotton fields. This combination of factors stripped slaves of any

vestiges of personality or individual identity and finalized the transformation from individual to commodity.

Attempts to define the appropriate response of black manhood to the systemic assault of slavery were wide ranging and have a long, rich history that has yet to be fully uncovered. Untold numbers of Africans resisted slavery; many were killed long before they reached the United States. Authors such as Olaudah Equiano attempt to tell the story of early slave resistance to the transatlantic slave trade. But Equiano, and a few others like him, are exceptions to the rule. Due to the sheer lack of individuals who could tell their story in English, much of the history of this resistance is either lost or told from the perspective of slavers. Other tales of resistance are recorded by those who worked to quell rebellion in the New World. While much of what we know of slave rebellion is told from the perspective of the victor, Douglass was, most definitely, not the first black man to attempt to define an adequate response to slavery that would both preserve black masculine honor and avoid the condemnation of savagery, a common description of Africans and one oft repeated rationale for the continuance of the South's "peculiar institution." A variety of different rhetorical styles attempted to respond to this by asserting differing levels of emphasis on physical strength, rationality, individual will, patriarchal systems of family governance, the telling of an African history of achievement, and an assertion of heroic self-restraint.

Notably, one of the most controversial documents of the antebellum period is a call for black men to reclaim their masculinity and demonstrate what might be termed "martial resistance" to slavery. In addition to being a call to arms, David Walker's "Appeal" is an articulation of what he believed was the truly manly response to slavery

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and a harsh condemnation of those black men who, he believed, allowed the continued victimization of the black community. He writes that his motive for producing the *Appeal* is to “awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in the *Republican Land of Liberty!!!!*” (Walker, 5). Throughout the piece, Walker is almost as hard on slaves who refuse to resist as he is to those who protect and benefit from the system of forced labor. At one point, he goes so far as to argue:

The man who would not fight under our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in the glorious and heavenly cause of freedom and of God – to be delivered from the most wretched, abject, and servile slavery, that ever a people was afflicted with since the foundation of the world, to the present day – ought to be kept with all of his children or family, in slavery, or in chains, to be butchered by his *cruel enemies*.

(Walker, 15)<sup>14</sup>

His argument is, in part, for black men to wake up to the atrocities they are allowing to continue and take back their own power. He does this by referencing both historical examples and contemporary failings.

First and foremost, the full title of Walker’s *Appeal* is particularly telling. He entitles his work “Walker’s *Appeal*, in Four Articles, together with preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America.” From this title, it is clear that he is calling upon citizens rather than individuals. The loaded nature of this word in this particular context suggests that 1) Walker is proposing that all black Americans were already citizens of the nation whether formally recognized or not, and 2) that he is addressing primarily men rather than

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<sup>14</sup> Note here that Walker’s vision of Christ is that of the militant Christ. We will see throughout this discussion how representations of Christ’s version of masculinity often make their way into discussion of the ideal black man.

women. To further drive home this idea, the appeal itself begins “My dearly beloved brethren and citizens,” an articulation that cements the link between gender and citizenship. Throughout the text itself, Walker makes use of the language of “fathers” suggesting his vision of African history was, by in large, patriarchal and that the defense of the community rested squarely on the shoulders of its men.

In addition to clearly addressing his fellow black brethren, Walker also suggests the one of the greatest ills, and the source of many other ills, of slavery is the refusal to recognize the manhood of the black man. In his very first article, entitled “Our Wretchedness in Consequence of Slavery,” he writes;

My beloved brethren: - The Indians of North and South American – the Greeks – the Irish, subjected under the king of Great Britain – the Jews, that ancient people of the Lord – the inhabitants of the islands of the sea – in fine, all the inhabitants of the earth (except however, the sons of Africa) are called *men*, and of course are, and ought to be free. But we, (coloured people) and our children are *brutes*!!

(Walker, 9)

Even other oppressed peoples have the distinction of not being classified as anything other than human. The native peoples of America, the Greeks, the Irish and Jews may be or have been subjugated but no one, according to Walker, argued they were brutes.

Interestingly, Walker links the lack of respect for black masculinity, by referencing both “men” and “the sons of Africa” with a larger lack of respect for the humanity of the entire community. He also claims that this refusal to recognize the manhood of blacks comes in part from the unwillingness of black men to stand up for themselves. In an interesting reading of Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Walker suggests that before blacks will ever be recognized as fully human, their men must first be seen as men. He writes;

For my own part, I am glad Mr. Jefferson has advanced his positions for your sake; for you will either have to contradict or confirm him by your own actions, and not by what our friends have said or done for us; for those things are other men's labours, and do not satisfy the Americans, who are waiting for us to prove to them ourselves, that we are MEN, before they will be willing to admit the fact.

(Walker, 32)

In order to be taken seriously as fully human, Walker argues that the black community cannot depend upon the words or labors of others, especially since so much of the work of white abolitionists portrayed black manhood as victimized and incapable of self-defense. As Walker sees it, the work of abolitionists will be for naught if blacks will not stand up for themselves and reclaim their own manhood.

In his articulation of what type of response would be appropriate from black masculinity, and, consequently, his definition of true black manhood, Walker holds up multiple examples from both biblical and historical sources. One of the first examples he shares is that of Moses. By linking Moses to both Egypt and Israel, Walker is able to claim that blacks are heirs to his history. He discusses in great length the ways in which Israel was better treated by the Egyptians than African slaves are by the supposed Christian nation of America, but then he does something particularly interesting to the study of black masculinity. He praises Moses for going against his adopted family and, instead, choosing the family of his birth by aligning himself with the Israelite slaves. He explains that Moses would have “rather suffered shame, with the people of God, than to enjoy pleasures with that wicked people for a season” (Walker, 13). Turning then to contemporary situation of African slaves, he then declares:

O! that the coloured people were long since of Moses' excellent

disposition, instead of courting favour with, and telling news and lies to our *natural enemies*, against each other – aiding them to keep their hellish chains of slavery upon us. Would we not long before this time, have been respectable men, instead of wretched victims of oppression as we are?

(Walker, 14)

It is because they have chosen what Walker might deem the path of least resistance that blacks are not “respectable” and that they continue to suffer at the hands of their enemies. Had they aligned themselves with the side of right, God would have, like he did for Moses and the Israelites, helped them to secure their freedom.

This is not the only example that Walker uses to express how far the blacks have fallen from their historic place in civilization.<sup>15</sup> He also uses the example of Hannibal, one of the greatest military strategists of antiquity who was known for aptly assessing his enemy’s weaknesses.<sup>16</sup> Given the strength of “martial manhood” in the South, the use of Hannibal as an ideal example of black manhood was especially apt because it allowed secondary readers of the text, namely white slaveholders, to consider the history of black military prowess. In Walker’s hands, Hannibal’s exploits become an original slave rebellion worthy of replication. He writes:

Yea further, when I view that mighty son of Africa, HANNIBAL, one of the greatest generals of antiquity, who defeated and cut off so many thousands of white Romans or murderers, and who carried his victorious arms, to the very gate of Rome, and I give it as my candid opinion, that had Carthage been well united and have given him good support, he would have carried that cruel and barbarous city by storm. But they were dis-united, as the coloured people are now,

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<sup>15</sup> For more on Walker’s *Appeal* as Jeremiad, see David Howard-Pitney’s *The African American Jeremiad: Appeals for Justice in America*.

<sup>16</sup> Walker had earlier argued that blacks should await the right hour for their rebellion. He writes “Never make an attempt to gain our freedom of *natural right*, from under our cruel oppressors and murderers, until you see your way clear” (Walker, 14). And then later, “when that hour arrives and you move, be not afraid or dismayed; for be you assured the Jesus Christ the King of heaven and earth who is God of justice and armies, will surely go before you” (Walker, 14).

in the United States of America, the reason our natural enemies are enabled to keep their feet on our throats.

(Walker, 22-23).

Not only does Walker redeem the history of Africa in this rendering of events, but he holds Hannibal up as both a positive and a negative example. Hannibal, himself, is the positive example of what black manhood can be while the disunity of the city of Carthage becomes a criticism of the black community. Later Walker will write; “Yes, how can our friends but be embarrassed, as Mr. Jefferson says, by the question, ‘that further is to be done with these people?’” as they “so meanly submit to their murderous lashes, to which neither the Indians nor any other people under Heaven would submit” (Walker, 32).

Walker prays for the day when the Lord and Saviour “will give you Hannibal” but he also pleads that the slaves will “will give him your support and let him go his length, and behold in him the salvation of your God.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, when the day comes for rebellion, Whipper argues, don’t fracture into division, but back the moves of the new Hannibal.

This is an interesting articulation of masculinity because it suggests loyalty and obedience to a leader rather than individual action or interests. Marital manhood requires an emphasis on honor to exploit the lack of individual autonomy. Honor is gained by deference to the community and is only as powerful as its recognition within that community. What this brings out is the fact that the language of rebellion and the language of slavery are not as dissimilar as one might like them to be. Some of the same

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<sup>17</sup> In this text, Walker uses the God of Divine Justice and Christ Militant as part of his argument for retributive violence. However, he also invokes the Forgiving Christ when he suggests that whites turn aside from their oppression of blacks. This does not mean that he honors whites who renounce slavery, rather, he says “Should tyrants take it into their heads to emancipate any of you, remember that your freedom is your natural right. You are men, as well as they, and instead of returning thanks to them for your freedom, return it to the Holy Spirit, who is our rightful owner” (Walker, 81). Instead, he claims that if whites will willingly repent of the wrongs they have done to blacks, blacks will not seek retribution.

qualities that allow one to be a good slave – understanding and doing the master’s will – also translate into qualities that make a good soldier. We see the rhetorical difficulty this opens up during discussions of arming slaves and/or contraband during the Civil War.<sup>18</sup>

An effective rebellion requires that some individuals subsume their own will to the larger needs of the military action; the difference, of course, being that, ideally, this is done with individual consent. And even if unity cannot be gained within a rebellion, Walker applauds the fact that “they are men who would be cut off to a man, before they would yield to the combined forces of the whole world--in fact, if the whole world was combined against them, it could not do any thing with them, unless the Lord delivers them up” (Walker).<sup>19</sup>

In fact, Walker’s greatest criticism is not for those who fail to line up under a leader or choose to serve the master of a rebellion, but rather, for those who refuse to consider their own best interest. According to Walker, individuality is not necessarily manhood’s greatest hallmark. Rather, recognizing which side serves one’s best interest, and then going all in, can be a particularly strong kind of manhood. Individuals who cannot do so do not represent true manhood.

One especially interesting example in the text highlights the way in which black manhood is characterized by Walker. Following right on the heels of his discussion of the failures of black manhood to defend itself and its people from the oppression of slavery, Walker shares the story of a rebellion that was undone by the work of a women. After

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<sup>18</sup> At one point, both sides consider arming blacks in support of their cause. And, both sides eventually do so. The South, at the very end of the war when it makes negligible difference, arms slaves in exchange for granting them free papers.

<sup>19</sup> Earlier in the text, Walker writes “Have we any Master but Jesus Christ alone? Is he not their Master as well as ours? – What right then, have we to obey and call any other Master, but Himself? How we could be so *submissive* to a gang of men, whom we cannot tell whether they are *as good* as ourselves or not, I never could conceive” (Walker, 20). Clearly, Walker views this potential Hannibal as something of a prophet to his people and, consequently, deserving of the kind of obedience normally reserved for such positions.

reprinting an article from the *Columbian Centinel* which details a rebellion of a slave coffle traveling through Kentucky driven by a man by the name of Gordon, Walker uses the example of a woman to demonstrate what is wrong with black manhood. The article, written from the perspective of pro-slavery, outlines the escape of sixteen Negroes, the “murder” of two white slavers, and the “theft” of \$2,400. Walker rewrites this event, but rather than focusing on the heroism of the black men who attempted to free themselves and their fellow slaves, as might be expected, he chooses to emphasize the actions of one Negro woman who out of an unexplained emotion, be it fear, loyalty, or misguided compassion, helped Gordon to “mount his horse and flee; pursued, however, by one of the gang on another horse, with a drawn pistol” (Walker, 27). By placing emphasis on the failure of the weak-willed woman<sup>20</sup> rather than on the heroes of the rebellion, Walker delicately suggests that black men who refuse to stand up to slavery and act in the best interest of their community are not really men at all. Horrified by her actions, Walker attempts to understand what might prompt a woman to defend the man who was “driving them like brutes” against the just action of those who had “by the help of God . . . got their chains and hand-cuffs thrown off, and caught two of the wretches and put them to death” (Walker, 28). In an attempt to understand her motivations, he writes “Was it the natural *fine feelings* of this woman, to save such a wretch alive?” (Walker, 28).

He then links the decision of this woman, whose actions garner only a throwaway clause in the article published in the *Centinel*, to the decision of slaves throughout history

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<sup>20</sup> It appears from the *Appeal* alone that Walker did not think too highly of women. In discussing the theme of intermarriage, he writes; “that the black man, or man of colour, who will leave his own colour (provided he can get one, who is good for anything) and marry a white woman, to be a double slave to her, just because she is *white*, ought to be treated by her as he surely will be, viz: as a NIGER!!!!” (Walker, 11). The term double slave suggests that not only will he be a slave by virtue of his color, but that the marriage relation was likely to turn a man into a slave of his wife more generally.

to acquiesce to the horrors of slavery. He links the actions of the slave woman and the inaction of slave men through a common hatred of violence. He explains:

Natural observations have taught me these things; there is a solemn awe in the hearts of blacks, as it respects *murdering* men: whereas the whites (though they are great cowards) where they have the advantage, or think that there are any prospects of getting it, they murder all before them, in order to subject men to wretchedness and degradation under them.

(Walker, 28).

However, Walker makes a distinction between “murder” and, as he had described earlier, “putting to death” those who would do harm to oneself as “we must remember that *humanity, kindness and the fear of the Lord, does not consist in protecting devils*” (Walker). Interestingly, as Walker links these ideas, he does so basing his analysis on common gender tropes of the day. By using a woman, who would have been understood to be more emotional, spiritually sensitive, and compelled by compassion, to dramatize the response of slaves to slaveholders, Walker suggests that these feminine qualities are the reason that blacks have not engaged in self-defense or outright rebellion. He then goes even further, suggesting that there is no such thing as too much violence in the cause of liberty by condemning the black men who took to flight without insuring the death of the slave driver, Gordon. Bringing together a variety of concerns that he has about the black community, Walker condemns them for “acting like blockheads” when they “did not make sure of the wretch’ (29). This decisions, however, was not based only on ignorance but also cowardice as “eight white men can frighten fifty of them” (Walker, 29). Throughout the text, Walker continually rails against black men who do nothing

while whites abused and imprison them. Walker later will argue that “they know we are too servile to assert our rights as men” (Walker, 71).

This rhetoric then takes an interesting turn making a reading of Walker both complicated and useful. He explains that, “as Mr. Jefferson wisely said, they have never found us out” and that, once blacks gain confidence in their abilities and are “fully awakened and put in motion” there is an “unconquerable disposition in the breasts of blacks” that “will be subdued, only with destruction of the animal existence” (Walker, 29). Instead of attempting to control that rage within the bounds of justice, as Douglass will later do, Walker revels in the potential for uncontrolled violence that can be unleashed once black men realize their own strength and position. In opening Pandora’s Box, white slaveholders risk unleashing all manner of violence in response to slavery. While this was a calculated rhetorical move meant to instill fear in the heart of slaveholders who were still concerned about events in Haiti, this move opens him up to a great deal of criticism from both pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups. While he claims again and again that he does not wish for this kind of bloodshed – but, rather, is attempting to make the possibility known – statements like this suggest otherwise.<sup>21</sup>

However, this is really an unfair articulation of Walker’s vision of ideal black masculinity as it needs to be paired with his discussions regarding ignorance and the importance of education. If self-defense and aggressiveness are at heart masculine traits, education can, according to this reading of things, channel these tendencies into appropriate behaviors. As black men were intentionally kept in ignorance, their

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<sup>21</sup> Interestingly when Walker discusses Haiti, he doesn’t reference Toussaint L’Ouverture but the ambiguity of his comments suggest that he may have preferred the work of Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

traditionally masculine traits<sup>22</sup>, acquired biologically, were not balanced by education. Although once the guardians of powerful and civilized nations, black men had been forced into ignorance by supposedly Christian peoples. “Ignorance, my brethren,” he writes, “is a mist, low down into the very dark and almost impenetrable abyss in which, our fathers for many centuries have been plunged” (Walker, 22). It is because of this that “my colour will root some of them out of the face of the earth” (Walker, 23). Additionally, it is “ignorance,” Walker claims that is the “mother of treachery and deceit” (Walker, 23). Essentially, Walker is arguing that if black manhood continues to be denied and written off, it will reemerge, but in a form that acknowledges its wounded nature. Man cannot continually deny his desire for respect and the ability to protect himself and his loved ones without it doing damage to the core. He writes;

They (the whites) know well, if we are *men* – and there is a secret monitor in their hearts which tells them we are – they know, I say, if we *are* men, and see them treating us in the manner they do, that there can be nothing in our hearts but death alone, for them, notwithstanding we may appear cheerful, when we see them murdering our dear mothers and wives, because we cannot help ourselves. Man, in all ages and all nations of the earth, is the same. Man is a peculiar creature – he is the image of his God, though he may be subjected to the most wretched condition upon the earth, yet the spirit and feeling which constitute the creature, man, can never be entirely erased from his breast, because the God who made him after his own image, planted it in his heart; he cannot get rid of it. The whites knowing this, they do not know what to do; they know that they have done us so much injury, they are afraid that we, being men, and not brutes, will retaliate, and woe will be to them...

(Walker, 69)

While this passage is written directly to those who claim that blacks are happy in their position, yet fear that they have “the tiger by the tail,” it also asserts the idea that a

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<sup>22</sup> This is according to a traditional rendering of biological masculinity in the nineteenth century.

masculinity that is subjugated for too long becomes, once unleashed, capable of great damage. This is not because it is in the nature of black manhood to desire bloodshed but, rather, that white treatment has created this by continually denying that which God has implanted in the black man's heart.

To balance this out Walker enters into a discussion of black manhood that mimics much of what has been called "respectable manhood." In his discussion on the importance of education, he stresses the ways in which black men are responsible for the moral and intellectual uplift of their fellow brethren. There is a stress on both community and the common future that all black men share. He appeals to "men of colour, who are also of sense" to "cast your eyes upon the wretchedness of your brethren and do your utmost to enlighten them" (Walker, 33). In a community where being able to "write a good hand" is equated with being educated, Walker believes there is much to be done before blacks will aspire to being more than "*wielding the razor and cleaning boots and shoes*" (Walker, 34). Walker desires that black men aspire to the roles of middle class gentleman, individuals who are well-spoken and well-educated.<sup>23</sup> He will argue later that instead of making "light" of new bits of knowledge, or pretending that one already knows more than he really does, that "a man of good-breeding, sense and penetration, if he had heard a subject told twenty times over, and should happen to be in company where one should commence telling it again, he would wait with patience on its narrator, and see if he would tell it as it was told in his presence before" (Walker, 38). Much like Douglass

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<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that one the greatest deficits Walker notes in the education of young, black men is that of grammar. Clearly, Walker is interested in having black men be able to present themselves in such a way as to garner respect for their sophistication.

and William Whipper, whose speech will be discussed later, Walker wished for black men to be regarded as men and as gentlemen.<sup>24</sup>

As an example of this kind of black manhood, a form of masculinity that Walker clearly wishes “militant manhood” will pave the way for, he holds up the Reverend Richard Allen of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. In Walker’s mind, Allen becomes a shining example of this kind of man because he has chosen to devote his life to the spiritual uplift of his people. Throughout the text, both in his description of “militant manhood” and “respectable manhood,” Walker saves the greatest criticism for African American men who turn their backs on their community. In the slave quarters, these are men that work as overseers, who curry favor with the master. Within the free black community, these are men who support colonization, which in Walker’s mind, is really a scheme for the continuance of slavery, and who turn their backs on the slave. Allen does neither of these, rather, he is:

a man whom God many years ago raised up among his ignorant and degraded brethren, to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified to them—who notwithstanding, had to wrestle against principalities and powers of darkness to diffuse that gospel with which he was endowed among his brethren – but who having overcome the combined powers of devils and wicked men, has under God planted a Church among us which will be as durable as the foundation of the earth on which it stands.

(Walker, 65)

In founding the first independent black denomination in the United States, Allen opened up a space for African American leadership and development. As Walker references here, it was an uphill battle to gain recognition from the Methodist Church. And it is that battle

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<sup>24</sup> Later on in the text, Walker will argue that “if ever we become men, (I mean *respectable* men, such as other people are), we must exert ourselves to the full” (Walker, 70).

that Walker celebrates in these lines. Reverend Allen's sacrifices did not just benefit him, but opened the door for many other African Americans.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, Walker will "affirm it to the world, that he (Allen) had done more in a spiritual sense for his ignorant and wretched brethren than any other man of colour has, since the world began" (Walker, 67).

Walker's balance between "militant manhood" and "respectable manhood" might have prioritized the more embodied forms of those discourses; however, his exploration of black manhood was not universally accepted within the African American community. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has recently expressed in such eloquent language, there is a danger in telling a single story. While Walker pushed hard against certain claims made by both abolitionist and pro-slavery forces, other African American abolitionists were attempting to make use of other ruptures in the discourse regarding manhood and race by emphasizing the interiority of black manhood. One outstanding example of this particular tactic can be found in the person of William Whipper and, more specifically, in his work with the American Moral Reform Society.

As a successful businessman and leader of the American Moral Reform Society, an integrationist reform group, Whipper represented, in his own public persona, a version of black "respectable manhood." In a speech printed in *The Colored American* in 1837, William Whipper defended the practice of non-violent organization against slavery as part of his work in the reform movement. His arguments in favor of that course of action were linked to a claim that non-violence was a greater characteristic of manliness than aggression. Turning the tables on the rhetoric of the happy slave, Whipper argued that

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<sup>25</sup> The AME was more than just a congregation. A wide variety of uplift groups organized themselves under its umbrella. These gave both training and opportunities for leadership and community building to African-Americans that were not available previously.

African Americans demonstrated such high levels of patience because they were more rational, rather than the oft argued claim that they were more patient, charitable or Christian, than their white counterparts. By doing so, Whipper could have suggested that black men were a better example of “respectable manhood” than any white man, thereby creating a description of blacks as rational creatures that would have opened up a space for black men to enter and find respect within the public sphere. Unfortunately, he does not engage with this rupture.

Instead, after opening his address with the assertion that non-violence, or nonresistance to aggression, can be defended through the use of Christian scripture, Whipper explains that he will leave those arguments “to the minister at the altar, and the learned and biblical theologian” (Whipper), and that he will focus on the rational arguments for the use of non-violence in the battle against oppression. His opening statement to this effect develops an interesting rationale for his purpose in using reason; one that is deeply connected to the larger cultural debate over masculinity and black ability. For this reason, it deserves to be quoted at some length. He explains:

The resolution asserts that the practice of non-resistance to physical aggression is consistent with reason. A very distinguished man asserts, ‘that reason is the distinguishing characteristic that separates man from the brute creation,’ and that this power was bestowed upon him by his Maker, that he might be capable of subduing all subordinate intelligences to his will.’ It is this power when exerted in its full force, that enables him to conquer the animals of the forest, and which makes him lord of creation. There is a right, and a wrong method of reasoning. The latter is governed by our animal impulses, and wicked desires, without regard to the end to be attained. The former fixes its premises, in great fundamental, and unalterable truths – surveys the magnitude of the objects, and the difficulties to be surmounted, and calls to its aid the resources of enlightened wisdom, as a landmark by which to conduct its operations.

(Whipper)

Using an argument that has its roots in the philosophy of Aristotle, Whipper argues that the ability to reason is the main distinguishing factor between man and beast. Developing his argument from this philosophical base was key, allowing him to indirectly respond to apologists for slavery who argued that blacks fell somewhere on the evolutionary line between animals and humans. His reference to “conquer(ing) the animals of the forest” and being “lord of creation” also are a veiled nod to pro-slavery apologetics. As he proceeds forward, he argues that not only do men who choose the path of non-violence, demonstrate the powers of rational thought, they do so more abundantly than other men. This distinction could have easily been used to describe the superiority of black rationality by pointing to the ways in which slaves worked non-violently to secure their needs and protect their families. Although Whipper does not explicitly do this, coming from an abolitionist, it is not unfair to assume that it lies unspoken under the surface.

Whipper is now able to suggest that the choice of nonviolence is evidence of a higher power of reason, thereby reversing arguments made by apologists for slavery. While all men, black and white included, are capable of reason, there is right and wrong reasoning. Reasoning is incorrect when it is driven by baser animal instinct – such as avarice – while it is correct when it considers long-term and large scale effects of different modes of action. Whipper also links the correct use of reason to an unsentimental or unemotional mindset. True reason, according to Whipper’s articulation of it, is not dissuaded by sentimentality nor does it allow itself to be overcome by strong emotion. This additional layer to his argument would allow for a refutation of the idea that black men were overcome by strong emotion making them more feminine and thereby needing the care of the patriarchal slave owner. It also responds to the threat that

black masculinity posed to the white community; a threat that Walker had attempted to utilize.<sup>26</sup> Finally, and perhaps, most importantly, it makes non-violent nonresistance a manly trait rather than an overly sentimental one. Rather than refusing to engage in violence out of fear, a misplaced compassion for one's oppressor, or some other seemingly weak reason, Walker can develop a strong non-violent resistance based on manly forbearance and heroic fortitude in the face of danger for the sake of the greater good of one's own community.

Whipper goes on to argue that non-violence allows for the demonstration of fortitude and persistence in the face of the great evil of slavery. This line of reasoning would have worked well to undo rationales for slavery that were rooted in the supposed acquiescence of the slaves. Referring again to the importance of right reason, Whipper explains:

For were it not for these high human endowments we should never behold men in seasons of calamity, displaying tranquility and fortitude in the midst of difficulties and dangers, enduring poverty and distress with a noble heroism, suffering injuries and affronts with patience and serenity – stifling resentment when they have it in their power to inflict vengeance – displaying kindness and generosity towards enemies and slanderers – submitting to pain and disgrace in order to promote the prosperity of their friends and relatives, or the great interests of the human race.

(Whipper)

Applying this idea to the experience of slave, which he does not do explicitly here, does a great deal to humanize the individual. Rather than presenting the slave as without volition, this rendering of trauma or crisis suggests that the individual retains a level of control in the ways that he or she chooses to respond. The individual has “it in their

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<sup>26</sup> And which Douglass both utilized and, intentionally, skirted.

power to inflict vengeance” but forbears in order to maintain the “prosperity” of the community and the larger “interests of the human race.”<sup>27</sup> Inaction becomes, in this moment, a kind of action, and that response is validated rather than negated while individual humanity and will is maintained. This kind of discourse suggests a level of individual will missing from many abolitionist descriptions of slavery; a failing that it appears Whipper is trying to insert even as he makes use of the technique of moral suasion.

There is something really powerful in the statement regarding the heroic nature of fortitude and tranquility in the midst of destruction. In this passage, Whipper takes the language of heroic patience, not unlike the romantic heroes of Sir Walter Scott, and frames it in such a way as to make it applicable to the suffering of Negro slaves. These brave men then become martyrs for the entire human race thus linking them to legendary stories of greatness and heroic martyrdom. He goes on to claim that any who would argue differently are either “the offspring of pusillanimity” or they are “incapable of conceiving the purity of the motives from which they animate” (Whipper). Clearly, any who would argue otherwise is not guided by higher reason but, rather, cowardice or rage. Not only that, but any attempt to redress wrongs through the “savage<sup>28</sup> custom of war” is an attempt to “maltreat their bodies for the acts of their minds” (Whipper).

In addition to describing the experience of victims of trauma as having a level of choice, of free will, this description prioritizes the need for individuals to protect and defend that which is most important to them, especially when it comes to issues of friends and family. Many would ‘willingly’ submit to horror they would otherwise fight against

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<sup>27</sup> This idea will be developed further in the character of Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

<sup>28</sup> Again, this works to highlight references to contemporary conceptualizations of Africans.

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if they believed it could protect their loved ones. We see this idea underlining Stowe's Uncle Tom later in this project.

Finally, this description suggests that the path of nonviolence can be taken because one believes that the greater good is served through other forms of resistance. While acts of violent resistance may end certain types of oppression, they often come at a cost that is paid by other community members or future generations. Whipper here argues that reason suggests to choose not to do physical battle is a sign, not of passivity, but the application of logic to the historical narrative. He then argues that individuals who believe that such acts may be considered, by some, as "the offspring of pusillanimity," but this is only because "they themselves are either incapable of conceiving the purity of motives from which they emanate, or are too deeply engulfed in the ruder passions of our nature, to allow them to bestow a just tribute to the efforts of enlightened reason" (Whipper).

In this description of the kinds of oppression that court a non-violent response, the idea of direct physical danger is never truly broached. Instead, it suggests that violence is done as a response to differences of opinion rather than due to actual physical and psychic harm done upon a particular group. Clearly, this was not the case with slavery. In the battle to end slavery, there were very real consequences for the differing definitions of humanity. To lose the philosophical battle over the questions of rights and the definition of what it meant to be human would condemn a group of people to systematic violence. Even greater still, the system of violence that capitalized on the labor of a substantial portion of the population was underway in a large portion of the United States, supported both financially and legally by the nation. This debate was not a

hypothetical or philosophical argument, but rather one rooted in the experience of millions of slaves throughout the U.S.

Another problem with this formulation of a non-violent response to slavery is that it leaves no space for the expression of any emotion other than tolerance or patience. As it puts the reality of any wrong done to slaves on the back burner, it closes off the possibility of true emotional response to these wrongs. Righteous indignation, anger, or sadness have no space in this equation, nor is there any space from which individuals might demonstrate these emotions in a non-violent form. Rather, Whipper argues that “we often see men, while under the reigning influence of passion, as fit subjects for the lunatic asylum on account of insanity” (Whipper). Nonviolence does not need to ignore the emotional realm in order to be effective; far from it, as many instances of highly successful non-violent non-cooperation have emphasized emotive experience.<sup>29</sup> One of the greatest powers of non-violent non-cooperation is that it allows individuals to channel anger and sadness into productive forms of community building. However, what Whipper is advocating here may be an attempt to spell out a different kind of non-violent masculinity, but it is a still-born attempt because it ignores the powerful pull of emotion on the experience of fathers, sons, and husbands. It is a non-violence that advocates petitioning and waiting, not forms of direct action that would open up a space for these emotions to work themselves out productively. And as such, it is an incomplete form of non-violence.

The other problem with this formulation of a non-violent response to slavery is that in elevating inaction to the position of action, it ignores the possibilities of non-

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<sup>29</sup> One example of this is the women who danced alone in the streets of Chile to protest the disappearances of loved ones under the Pinochet regime.

violent action. Unlike Douglass, who attempted to find a link between direct action and moral suasion, this rendering, by and large, avoids discussion of how one might resist violence without resorting to violence oneself. This is a difficult and complicated discussion with no easy answers. The use of force, even non-violent force, can be a slippery slope.<sup>30</sup> It is an important conversation to have even when individuals involved do not quite master the balance between the use of non-violent force and, what might be deemed, outright manipulation.<sup>31</sup>

Just two paragraphs later, Whipper follows this characterization of individuals who would choose violence resistance over other forms of engagement when he reverses traditionally held understanding of barbarity and civilization. In his continuing examination of the use of violence over the course of history, he writes “Our country and the world have become the munificent patron of many powerful, existing evils, that have spread their devastating influence over the best interests of the human race. One of which is adopting the savage custom of wars, and fighting as a redress of grievances, instead of some means more consistent with reason and civilization” (Whipper). By suggesting that the United States utilized savage tactics to deal with the problems it faced, Whipper again inverts the common trope that placed Europe and the US at the height of civilization attempting to civilize savages from the “dark continent.”

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<sup>30</sup> One example of this is the controversy surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement’s decision to close roads as part of their protest. Some claimed this was a non-violent act that demonstrated the lack of control blacks feel over their own lives due to systemic racism. Others argue that by shutting down roads, the Black Lives Move movement put at risk individuals in need of emergency services. While this is a complex issue, it is a discussion very much worth having.

<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting that Mohandas K. Gandhi was very much aware of the difficult of finding this balance. This is, in part, why he entitled his autobiography *My Experiments with the Truth*.

After comparing reason to the emotionality of savages and brute, Whipper than turns an eye to the animal world. Here, again, with evolutionary arguments for slavery clearly in mind, Whipper makes the following claim:

We search in vain amongst the animal race to find a parallel, for their cruelties to each other on their own species, that is faithfully recorded in the history of wars and bloodshed, that have devoured empires, desolated kingdoms, overthrown government, and well nigh aimed at the total annihilation of the human race.

(Whipper)

Here, those who engage in violence of any sort are not only savages, but worse than the brute beast. Remembering that one of the arguments used for maintaining the system of slavery was that black men were savage animals whose behavior had to be closely monitored and corrected, it is clear that Whipper wants to subtly remind his audience at which end of the whip lay the animal. Whereas Walker suggested that the whip would eventually bring forth a mutated form of black manhood, Whipper suggests that black men are exhibiting true masculine virtues, virtues over and above those that are inherent in the master class, in their decision to maintain restraint.

Although Whipper has, to this moment, set up an argument to defend the superior rationality of blacks, given his emphasis on integrationist reform and abolition, he must ensure that he doesn't push this idea too far. While he could argue that blacks represent a higher sphere of rationale understanding, Whipper chooses not to argue that position, as it, once again, would, separate black from white, but, instead, argues against the idea of

an evolutionary progression of any kind. This may also be because of the need to emphasize the concept of monogenesis over polygenesis.<sup>32</sup> He explains:

Hence there seems to be a relation between man and the animal creation, that subsists, neither in their origin nor their end, but satisfactorily exhibits that man may exist in a state of purity, as far superior to their, as future happiness is to this world, and as far inferior, as we are distant from future misery.

(Whipper)

In these lines, Whipper attempts to do away with distinctions between various species of man by suggesting that man is one category while animal is an entirely different category. They are separated not only by origin but by outcome. Although it may be disappointing to see Whipper fall short of elevating the rationality of black men, it is important to recognize that to put an individual upon a pedestal by elevating them above their contemporaries is still a form of shackling them. Unfortunately, as we will see, Whipper does just that to the actions of Northern abolitionists.

Only after laying this philosophical ground does Whipper return to the subject of faith. Knowing that man, read as the specific gender and not as a catch-all term for humanity, has this higher power of reason, he can then put his faith in a power higher than himself. He can do this because he has linked this faith to rationality and not emotionality. He claims “The power of reason is the noblest gift of Heaven to man, because it assimilates man to his Maker. And were he to improve his mind by cultivating his reasoning powers, his acts of life would bear the impress of Deity, indelibly stamped upon them” (Whipper). Heightened spiritual sensitivity was the purview of femininity

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<sup>32</sup> During this period, scientist debated the concept of a polygenesis of species that, effectively, argued that blacks evolved separately from Europeans, and, consequently, were not of the same species as their white masters.

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due to its supposed connection to emotionality. However, if Whipper could link this greater spiritual power, which supposedly African American possessed and abolitionists claimed as their birthright, to rationality, it preserved the masculinity of both slave and abolitionist.

As he moves throughout his exegesis on non-violence, Whipper spends little time discussing tactical implications of his philosophy. When he does, he speaks in generality and never specifics. He explains, “I will readily agree that it is the unbounded duty of every individual to defend himself against both the vulgar and false aspersions of a wicked world. But then I contend that his weapons should be his reasoning powers” (Whipper). Although he has defended the right to self-defense, his comments do not actually articulate what this might look like. He never attempts to outline how one might put reason into action in a situation in which physical self-defense is called for. While philosophically non-violence is important to analyze, discussions of tactical non-violence are key to true engagement. Without them, one’s efforts are bound to fail.

Later in the speech, he again dances around issues of tactical non-violence when he argues:

If I, in conflict with mine enemy, overcome him by my superior physical powers, or my skill in battle, I neither wholly subdue him, nor convince him of the justness of my cause. His spirit becomes still more enraged, and he will seek retaliation and conquest on some future occasion, that may seem to him more propitious. If I intimidate him I have made him a slave, while I reign a despot; and our relation will continue unnatural, until our friendship has become fully restored.

(Whipper)

As this reflects upon the “don’ts” of non-violent confrontation, it deserves note as tactical advice, in addition to philosophical description. Its description of violent confrontation is

one that is potentially sound, but it confuses force and violence. As demonstrated in Herman Melville's novella "Benito Cereno," the use of violence to undo violence runs the risk of creating continuing cycles of aggression. Later, we see this idea working out historically. While Black Republicans, clearly, did not rule as despots after the Civil War, they were viewed as such by Southerners who had been "forcibly" subdued. While allowing slavery to continue was not an option, the Civil War was not without consequences for both black and white southerners. One of the benefits of non-violent direct action is that it holds out the possibility of breaking that cycle through the cession of violence followed by reconciliation. Obviously, this is a difficult task fraught with many possibilities for error and misstep, but it is also one worthy of undertaking.

However, Whipper's overall description of how non-violence might intervene in the cycle of violence, both here and elsewhere in the text, suggest that moral suasion coupled with holding out a hand of friendship would be sufficient to dismantle the system of violence that ran through the nation's legal, political, and economic systems. This is where direct action and the application of non-violent force or power to engage with systems of oppression was needed to demonstrate the true power relationship between slave and master. In addition to being a more effective way of engaging with these systems of power, direct action also has the benefit of allowing oppressed individuals to take back their own power and, in this case, reclaim their masculinity.

Where Whipper does engage in a description of non-violent action, he uses, not slave resistance or the Underground Railroad (which demonstrated the heroism of many fearless blacks), but instead describes the work of abolitionists. He explains;

They have been beaten and stoned, mobbed and persecuted from city

to city, and never returned evil for evil, but submissively, as a sheep brought before the shearer have they endured scuffings and scourges for the cause's sake, while they prayed for their prosecutors.

(Whipper)

This description does a couple of things. First and foremost, it emphasized the sacrifice of abolitionists rather than the fortitude of slaves. If one chooses to be cynical, one might argue that abolitionists preferred personal honor through martyrdom over bringing true action against slavery, or attention to the real lives of men and women they desired to redeem. Regardless, however, of one's reading, black manhood is lost to this description of white abolitionists. Second, it removes the dangers faced by slaves from the equation. Non-violence might work in the relatively safe North, especially when engaged in by whites; however, this description does nothing to look at how that same philosophy might be engaged in by free blacks or enslaved individuals living in the South. As such, it is woefully incomplete.

One of the greatest failings of Whipper's address is that, while it begins in such a way as to open up a space for a description of self-willed black masculinity by emphasizing the ways in which blacks non-violently engaged in rebellions against the system of slavery, it does not follow through with it. That possibility is, unfortunately, quickly closed off by a description of white abolitionist martyrdom. By focusing on the bravery of whites in the North, Whipper may hint at the possibility of a black masculinity rooted in self-restraint and an emphasis on larger community goals, but he hides it underneath a desire to elevate the service of white abolitionist. Thus, Whipper fails to make the most of an opportunity to demonstrate true black leadership, a criticism that many who took the path of integration with the abolitionist movement garnered.

Douglass, coming after both Walker and Whipper, continued to try to find a balance between these different types of masculinity as he engaged with ideas of moral suasion. While it would be intellectually dishonest to try to claim Douglass as an advocate for non-violent direct action, he was an individual who saw value in the principles of moral suasion, both in the cultural and political spheres. Consequently, his critiques of it, both implicit and explicit, are important to consider. He quickly recognized the lack of strength this technique granted to blacks, especially black men. Much like Walker, he desired black men to reclaim their manhood. As the cause of abolition was conducted by white abolitionists, it left no space for black masculinity. No space for any emotion not connected to feelings of victimization. And no space for individual will. Walker and Whipper attempted to suggest other kinds of realities for black men. Walker did so outside of the white abolitionist community while Whipper did so inside of it. Douglass' own path would work on both levels while still attempting to balance differing versions of masculinity with a description of individual black male will. He would eventually do so by developing the concept of "manly sentiment," a rendering of masculinity based on an emotional rendering of justice as the highest good.

**Chapter II:  
Argument to the Man: The Intersection of Race and Manhood in the Works of  
Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe**

This chapter looks specifically at the development of Frederick Douglass as both an orator and author spanning the period of his escape to the opening battles of the Civil War with an eye to the ways in which he both rebelled against traditional white abolitionist narratives regarding black masculinity while also valorizing certain aspects of sentimentality and performance. One of the most striking ways that he does this is by using forms of sentimentalism to create an image of himself as a Representative Man. Rather than rejecting appeals to sentiment or tactics of moral suasion outright, Douglass modifies these appeals by linking them to political action in order to suggest a kind of “manly sentiment” based on well recognized visions of justice and honor. Douglass’ “manly sentiment” as I will define it, included a respect for black masculinity and its role in black family life while emphasizing the emotional claims of justice and the defense of oneself and others. This can, perhaps, be most clearly seen in his response to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and his only foray into fiction, “The Heroic Slave.” While this transformation begins much earlier and continues to develop afterward, the ways in which his ideas were refined in response to Stowe’s text are especially illuminating.

In order to outline Douglass’ engagement with moral suasion and sentimentalism, this chapter will begin with Douglass’s attempts to articulate his struggle under the tutelage of William Lloyd Garrison, concluding with a description of his ultimate rejection of Garrisonian abolition. I will produce a reading of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that will take seriously Stowe’s attempt to envision a more sentimental masculinity in the

character of Uncle Tom and the way that this attempt has often been misread by scholars in the field. This interjection into the current scholarship on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will illuminate how Douglass used "The Heroic Slave" to demonstrate his own version of African American masculinity and "manly sentiment." Rather than taking the traditional path of reading Douglass's critique of Stowe as being based on race, I will illuminate the ways in which potentially competing visions of masculinity as well as his abiding interest in both political and sentimental abolition play a preeminent role in his revision of Uncle Tom in the character of Madison Washington. In a move that might appear counterintuitive, Douglass' use of sentimentality allowed him to work between these conflicting versions of black manhood responding in a way that Walker and Whipper were unable to do.

One of the downsides to sentimentality is that it prescribes a particular emotional response in an attempt to force the reader to feel as the writer wishes. At the same time that sentimental abolitionist literature forced readers to confront the humanity of the slave, it vacated the slave of individuality by presuming a one-to-one correlation between reader's emotion and the inner life of those held captive in the South. Douglass, daringly, found a way to use certain forms of sentimentalism while still engaging in the difficult process of self-fashioning. His work pushed the boundaries of sentimentalism without engaging in the kind of reduction that sentimentality would come to be known for.

Douglass recognized the need to make his audience feel an urgency to demand an end to slavery and begin to provide a pathway out of the worst effects of the centuries old institution. Emotion was as necessary a component as representations of slavery were to inform the public of the realities faced by African American citizens who were denied

their basic rights. The question that remained was how to do so without constricting the inner life of the slave with repeated representations of physical torment that called on viewers to image themselves in the position of the individual being wronged. Douglass found his answer in a form of what might be called “manly sentiment” that prioritized emotional appeals to justice, honor and patriotism. Appeals to these emotions, coupled with descriptions of the reality of slave life, attempted to create a rhetorical situation in which the reader could feel the rightness of abolition without the author creating overwrought caricatures of slaves that fit white abolitionists’ expectations. Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life* was just an opening foray into this new vision of sentimentality.

#### BEFORE UNCLE TOM’S CABIN

One of the powerful things about Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is that Douglass presents his story using the traditional tropes of a slave narrative, providing evidence for abolitionist arguments against slavery as well as presenting the harsh realities of slave life while opening up a space for the discussion of the internal life and personality of an individual slave. James Olney’s seminal article, “I was born: Slave Narratives as Autobiography and Literature,” outlines the ways in which Douglass takes the form of the slave narrative and manipulates it for his own purpose. While all of the horrors he faced are used as representations of the experiences of the slave community at large and fit the expectations of his audience, he finds ways to describe the individual harm that he experiences and the indignation that welled up in him as he gradually realized his position in the social order of the day. Responding to repeated attempts to silence him, both intellectually and physically, Douglass calls upon

his wounded manhood and the attack on his personal honor to express his condemnation of not only the institution of slavery but Thomas Auld, the slave breaker Covey, and others with whom he crossed paths. Slavery is not merely an abusive institution but, due in part to his great courage in placing before his readers the names of those who enslaved him, Douglass's description of slavery emphasizes the relationships between humans, rather than being only an exposition on larger systems of governance. Neither its perpetrators nor its victims remain anonymous in Douglass's account. In his narrative, he not only personalizes slavery but he fashions his personhood with respect to the experiences he has in both his childhood and young years. In a compelling reading of Douglass's *Narrative*, Vince Brewton argues that Douglass drew much of his understanding of respect and honor from his early years where those qualities were denied him. He writes;

The antithesis of 'slave' is 'free,' but this new condition requires some clarifying weight, an identity more psychologically and socially concrete than merely not slave. Douglass has available to him in his repertoire of identity options the self-made man, the Franklinian owner and proprietor of the self, and if any person literally realized the conception of 'self-made' it would be a self-freed slave. [break] The 'free' man Douglass becomes, based on evidence of autobiography and biography, both draws from and contributes to the identity model of the white slaveholder, a social group whose definition of liberty was hardly synonymous with good citizenship or hard work. The social being of a slaveholder in an honor culture, in which worth is predicated on reputation, resides necessarily on an exaggerated self-respect and a readiness for violence.

(708)

This reading of Douglass's narrative is compelling because it brings to light the impact of an honor society on the self-liberated slave's conception of masculinity. Raised in a community where his master's honor, in some sense, depended on the ability of the white

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man to control his black subjects, it is unsurprising that Douglass would come to claim manly honor, even as he attempted to reconfigure its contours, as a defense of his person in both his lived and his narrated life. As the description of his battle with the slave breaker Covey demonstrates, Douglass viewed the moment as a pivotal one in his struggle to see himself as truly a man.

What this discussion of Douglass's conception of manhood fails to note, however, is the ways in which Douglass was equally engaged in describing himself in terms reminiscent of Franklin's self-made man. Beginning with *The Narrative*, Douglass spends a great deal of time outlining the manner by which he was able to educate himself independently regardless of the many barriers to learning that were placed before him. As he took on the lecture circuit under the tutelage of the Garrisonians, his chief complaint was that they wished him to demonstrate the horrors of slavery through both verbal and physical testimony while leaving the theorizing to those more capable of doing so. Douglass's desire to not only speak his truth, but define how that truth should be understood and utilized in the battle to end slavery, manifested his need to have control not only over his person but over his intellectual property as well. Douglass, early on, in an attempt to both garner support for the causes of abolition and to engage in genuine self-fashioning, recognized the need to show strength as both a man capable of defending himself and a man who could comfortably engage in intellectual argumentation and analysis. This recognition develops as Douglass's continues throughout his career, both prior to and following the American Civil War.

Soon after the publication of his *Narrative*, the relationship between Douglass and his mentor, William Lloyd Garrison became strained as Douglass began to find outlets

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outside of the Garrisonians to tell his story. His experiences with anti-slavery organizations in England begin to solidify his belief that other avenues existed for him and he began to make connections outside of Garrisonian abolition. On September 22, 1848, Frederick Douglass published a letter to his former owner, Thomas Auld, in the pages of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* using language and commentary that hint at his disenchantment with the Garrisonians. In this letter, Douglass publicly chastised Auld for his treatment of Douglass and the rest of his family. Sparing no detail, Douglass attempted to use the language of Southern honor to humiliate his one time master by references to all manner of injustice including sexual assault, the mistreatment of elderly, and the brutal beating of innocent young women. In this letter, Douglass proved that he understood the Southern character and system of honor by speaking directly to those behaviors that were open secrets among slave holders and their human property bringing them out of hiding and into display for public consumption in such a way as to malign the honor of respected white Southern gentlemen. Additionally, by making his criticism public, he intimates that his honor as a black man has been disparaged and that restoration is required, a radical idea that would be met with both disgust and fury by Southern gentlemen.

As if to hold off any argument that he should deal quietly with the man that has harmed him, Douglass begins with the injunction that "all will agree that a man guilty of theft, robbery, or murder, has forfeited the right to concealment and private life; that the community have a right to subject such persons to the most complete exposure" (*Selected*, 111). By beginning in this way, he not only argues for the need for public recognition of wrongs done but he casts the venerable slave master in the role of thief and

murderer thus removing any honor gained from the position as master of men and replacing it with the reality of plantation life. This statement, not unlike a glove slap across the face, was a call for a rhetorical duel to be carried out in the public sphere.<sup>33</sup> This exchange, while highlighting the failures of the slave system, also gives Douglass, the man, an opportunity to respond directly and publicly to the man who insulted him in private. By doing so, Douglass rails not only against the system of slavery but also takes the space that he needs to defend his own personhood and manhood.

As Douglass sets himself up as a man who has been treated dishonorably and had his reputation called into question by a man of lesser character, he both calls out his former master and calls upon the right feelings of his readership to recognize the harm done to him. Douglass's courage in demanding redress to the harms done to his honor is, by its very nature, a political act. A slave cannot have been dishonored as he has no honor to claim; a man, however, can.<sup>34</sup> Truly, in this case, the medium is the message or at least an important component of it. While based on the claims of honor, this call is one that relies upon the feelings and sentiment of his readers to counteract the effects of personal history. As a man, he calls upon his reader to feel, not empathy, but a manly demand for justice – a sentiment different, perhaps than those called on by other abolitionists, but equally tied to profound emotion. Then to strengthen his call for justice, he describes the need to rectify the abuses of slavery in the language of the American Revolution, connecting issues of justice and patriotism to further press his case. He writes;

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<sup>33</sup> This move nicely combines the traits of both martial and respectable manhood. By engaging with Auld in this way, Douglass shows he understands and can play by the rules of the honor system in order to defend his personal honor. He also demonstrates a level of intellectualism that would appeal to respectable manhood.

<sup>34</sup> For more on this idea see, Orlando Patterson's *Slavery as Social Death*.

“I am myself; you are yourself; we are two distinct persons. What you are, I am. You are a man, and so am I. God created both, and made us separate beings. I am not by nature bound to you, or you to me. Nature does not make your existence depend upon me, or mine to depend upon yours. I cannot walk upon your legs, or you upon mine. I cannot breathe for you, or you for me; I must breathe for myself, and you for yourself. We are distinct persons, and are each equally provided with faculties necessary for our individual existence. In leaving you, I took nothing but what belonged to me, and in no way lessened your means for obtaining an honest living. Your faculties remained yours, and mine became useful to their rightful owner. I therefore see no wrong in any part of the transaction.

*(Selected, 113)*

This language harkens back to the language of the American Revolution as well as that of property ownership. Having already emancipated himself, Douglass takes his opportunity to express his rationale for doing so to the vision of individual rights and property ownership that were memorialized in much of the language of the formation of the United States. He claims for himself the rights of life and liberty as well as the property that he retains as owner of his own person. Douglass lays bare, publicly, the motivation for his self-liberation acknowledging, and claiming, the work of American forefathers.

Building on these emotional appeals of justice and patriotism, Douglass engages with more traditional forms of sentimentalism, namely, that of family and patriarchy. At the root of most claims of sentimentality is the language of the ideal family. However, instead of focusing on the language of motherhood and woman as the defender of the hearth, Douglass looks at slavery's impact on fatherhood and his ability to carry out his responsibilities as husband and protector. He outlines the ways in which he has been stripped of his ability to provide and care for his family including, importantly, his sisters and grandmother. He then lays bare the truth of Southern family honor by exposing the manner in which Auld has acted as patriarch to his plantation family and then the ways in which he has failed in that capacity.

Rather than defending his family, as the language of the benevolent patriarch would both expect and demand, Auld has commodified the family choosing profit over the sanctity of these relationships. As a patriarch, he is without honor having failed in his defense of the most vulnerable. Douglass, on the other hand, cherishes the opportunity to sacrifice for the benefit of his family and desires to take over from the failed white patriarch. Douglas writes:

At this moment, you are probably the guilty holder of at least three of my own dear sisters, and my only brother in bondage. These you regard as your property. They are recorded on your ledger, or perhaps have been sold to human flesh mongers, with a view to filling you own ever-hungry purse. Sir, I desire to know how and where these dear sisters are. Have you sold them? or are they still in your possession? What has become of them? are they living or dead? And my dear old grandmother, who you turned out like an old horse, to die in the woods – is she still alive? Write and let me know about them. If my grandmother be still alive, she is of no service to you, for by this time she must be nearly eighty years old – too old to be cared for by one to whom she has ceased to be of service, send her to me at Rochester, or bring her to Philadelphia, and it shall be the crowning happiness of my life to take care of her in her old age. Oh! she was to me a mother, and a father, so far as hard toil could make her such.

*(Selected, 115-116)*

The rhetoric of pro-slavery argued that slaveholders were benevolent patriarchs that maintained the system of slavery over time to ensure that their black charges were cared for, taught the importance of industry, and protected from the ill effects that too much freedom would engender among this community that lacked, in the whole, sufficient rational thought and foresight to care for themselves.<sup>35</sup> Many scholars have analyzed this rhetoric as a ruse perpetuated to cover up the financial and economic gains of slavery. Scholars such as Walter Benn Michaels have all correctly pointed to the underlying

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Jefferson famously said that African Americans were “as incapable as children” (Jefferson to Edward Coles, August 25, 1814)

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economic basis of racism crafting compelling arguments for much for much of the political schizophrenia of the antebellum period. However, it is important to take some of this rhetoric at face value if only to consider the implication for individuals who saw slavery as the better of two evils – the other being ignoring the inability, as they truly believed, of black to care for themselves – and felt trapped, even by their own benevolent impulses, in a system they did not create. In this case, the language Douglass offers here is not only damning in the extreme but it also represents a very personal attack on Auld's sense of self and place within a community best understood through codes of honor. Douglass's reflection that Auld holds four of his siblings and has "recorded them in his ledger" moves the language of benevolent patriarch to that of capitalist conquest. Douglass's pleading to have Auld reveal what has happened to his siblings rehumanizes the transactions while still suggesting Auld's failure to live up to the responsibilities he has as head of his household and plantation.

To show that he is the better man, Douglass discusses how, given the opportunity, he would be a more benevolent patriarch than Auld has shown himself to be. Imagining a future moment in which he might have stewardship over the life of the Auld family, he claims no desire for retaliation although, as he has argued just moments before, such would be wholly justified. Whereas Auld allows Douglass's sisters to be sexual assaulted by various men, Douglass, though it would be well deserved, would not allow such harm to come to Auld's daughter. And instead of treating Auld with cruelty, Douglass describes an idealistic family scene in which he, as patriarch, welcomes Auld into his home and treats him with kindness and, one might add, proper Southern hospitality. Douglass envisions the scenes thusly:

In doing this I entertain no malice towards you personally. There is no roof under which you would be more safe than mine, and there is nothing in my house which you might need for your comfort, which I would not readily grant. Indeed, I should esteem it a privilege, to set you an example as to how mankind ought to treat each other. I am your fellow man, but not your slave, Frederick Douglass.

(116-117)

The scene that Douglass sets up suggest an ideal home setting that stands in stark contrast to the home that was offered to him under Master Auld. Whereas Auld's home offered no protection to either man or woman, Douglass has become the patriarch of a home that can comfortably provide for the wants and needs of a guest. Where Auld's home required the sale and forced labor of enslaved men and women for its maintenance, Douglass's home can provide for the wants and needs of others without such barbarity. In a word, where Auld is a failed householder and patriarch, Douglass has mastered these skills and now, graciously (tongue-in-cheek) offers them to his former master.

The vision of the ideal home juxtaposed with a broken household is a common one in sentimental literature. Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, made excellent use of it in her abolitionist novel. Juxtaposing the homes of Quaker abolitionists, varying types of slaveholders, and Northern politicians, Stowe suggests that slavery had the potential to destroy homes both black and white. While much has been said about the impact of female characters on homemaking, little has been said regarding men's impact; especially the impact of her titular character, Uncle Tom.

#### UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

As Leslie A. Fiedler quite aptly expressed in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, "Of the complex novel by Mrs. Stowe (or God!), America has chosen to preserve

only the child's book" (Fiedler, 58). Recently, scholars continue to argue that in Stowe's book "agency is generally assigned in proportion to whiteness" of the character (Sale, 701). Due in part to the stage productions, product advertisements, and children's stories, the character of Uncle Tom was stripped of the interiority that Stowe attempted to invest him with in her original novel. It is this interiority that is such rich material for articulating a masculinity that opposes both the whimpering servant and the violent revolutionary. These moments are often overwhelmed and, at times, complicated by Stowe's overtly sentimental language choice as well as her racist depictions of slave life; however, they are clearly there and can, building on Todorov's research, add much to our reading of Uncle Tom.

Scholarship on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* often points to the feminization of the character of Uncle Tom as if it was something to be embarrassed about or shunned. Scholars and authors as varied as Donald Chaput, Addison Gayle Jr. and James Baldwin have all critiqued Tom's so called Christian deference to his master. Chaput argues that "irreparable damage and harm" was done by Stowe's portrayal of her titular character and Richard Yarbrough argues that Uncle Tom is missing a "sense of racial solidarity" (Levine, 71). Contemporary criticism of her portrayal of Uncle Tom led Stowe to imagine a victorious male hero who followed the code of traditional masculinity in *Dred: A Tale of the Dismal Swamp*. And Frederick Douglass wrote his only work of fiction, "The Heroic Slave," as a response to the novel creating in his character Madison Washington an answer to Stowe's articulation of a revised masculinity in Uncle Tom. However, if we recognize that Stowe was attempting to articulate something about the private sphere's influence on the public sphere, Uncle Tom's role as caregiver has a

revolutionary effect rather than be seen as an example of black submission to white oppression. Tom, like Douglass, prioritizes the defense of family and community, but in such a way that it is routinely missed.

Historians of American slavery, by in large, agree that one of the aims of the various restrictions placed on slaves during the antebellum period was to control and define the development of community within the slave quarters. The idea of an organized slave community was terrifying to Southerners who had read reports of Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Toussaint L'Ouverture. Before there could be a slave revolt there needed to be a cohesive slave community; consequently, slave laws in the nineteenth century often prohibited any kind of gathering including dances and church services outside the presence of a white chaperone. Additionally, the lack of legal protection afforded a slave family meant that spousal and parental roles were often defined and realigned according to white preference. Douglass's letter to Auld, among other things, demonstrates this. The breakup of the slave family helped to insure that ties to community were fragile and fragmented. Given this fear of community building, it follows that attempts by African Americans to develop and preserve communal ties were moments of rebellion to slavery. These were opportunity for slaves to manifest their humanity in the face of abounding forces bent on their dehumanization.

Too little work has been done on the ways in which the character of Tom revises what it means to be a truly heroic man. Scholarship that points to his "feminization" as an authorial failing entirely misses Stowe's blending of feminism and abolition.<sup>36</sup> In an

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<sup>36</sup> During this time, interest in the compassionate and gentle nature of Christ as an example of masculinity alongside the powerful vision of the angry God of the Old Testament was growing. Many salons of the day participated in conversations regarding the feminized nature of Christ. Stowe's brother was known to take part in these.

article published in *American Quarterly*, Cynthia Griffin Wolff points to some of the ways that discourses attempting to reimagine masculinity came into play in the formation of Stowe's *Uncle Tom*. She points first to the fact that rather than a static definition of both masculinity and femininity during the period in which the novel was composed "delineating appropriate ways of enacting femininity and masculinity were being hotly debated in a variety of arenas" (Wolff, 597). Reformers in both peace and abolition movements were discussing a manhood that made use of fraternity and brotherhood rather than a form of manliness tied to conquest and self-assertion. One powerful example that Wolff points to is the work of William Jay which, in her estimation, called for a 'revival of notions of masculinity that prized communal well-being over ruthless individual acquisition' (600). Additionally, Wolff points to the fact that Stowe's own brother, Henry Ward Beecher, was actively engaged in imagining a masculinity that prioritized community over individual. William Jay, Henry Ward Beecher, William Lloyd Garrison, and Stowe herself were all convinced that reforming society through the peace movement, temperance, and abolition required a masculinity that was not complicit in the spirit of the conqueror. And it is this new masculinity that Stowe imbues her title character with.

It is important, first, to recognize that the character of Uncle Tom is physically strong and vital. Many representations of his character show an elderly or aged man incapable of defense. The cover art of various historic editions of the text often shows either an elderly, enfeebled man or, worse, caricatures that belong to the world of blackface.<sup>37</sup> This would then suggest that the type of non-violent non-cooperation that he

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<sup>37</sup> While writing this piece, I had the opportunity to attend a exhibit at the Daley Library Special Collections entitled "Visualizing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." The curator, Richard J. Ellis, has collected a

eventually participates in was a matter of expediency rather than real choice. Stowe makes it clear to her readers that this is just not the case. She writes:

He was a large, broad-chested, powerfully made man, of a full glossy black, and a face whose truly African features were characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindness and benevolence. There was something about his whole air self-respecting and dignified, yet united with a confiding and humble simplicity.

(Stowe, 18)

Tom is not only physically very strong but Stowe also suggests he possesses both intelligence and strength of character. This is a man who, given half a chance, had the ability to rise above the condition of slavery. Uncle Tom is not a man who was too old or infirm to attempt escape; neither was he lacking in the strength necessary to protect his person. The fact that he ultimately does neither is an issue of choice rather than ability. We learn later, when he is on Legree's farm, that he is strong enough to pick cotton to spare yet he chooses to line the bags of his fellow slaves who fall behind rather than securing additional protection for himself. Additionally, Tom has a dignity about him that is not hidden by his position as a slave. There is, in this description of Tom, allusions to various depictions of Christ, a reference for many attempting to reform popular notions of masculinity, popular during this period.

We learn early on in the novel that, like those who advocated masculinity based on fraternity and brotherhood, Uncle Tom makes decisions based on the effect that his actions will have on the larger community. Much has been made of Tom's connection to the Shelby's and the way in which that plays into visions of benevolent paternalism; however, it is equally important to note that those relationships are not the ones that Tom

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considerable number of artifacts demonstrating how Uncle Tom has been remembered in popular culture. The majority of those artifacts represent Uncle Tom in a racist and enfeebled manner.

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considers when he chooses not to run away from the slave catcher Haley. Tom's decision not to run away with Eliza to avoid being sold south is not merely a choice undertaken to save Master Haley; rather, it was a measured reading of the consequences of his master's financial ruin on the larger body of slaves. Tom explains:

No, no – I an't going. Let Eliza go – it's her right! I wouldn't be the one to say no – t'an't natural for her to stay; but you heard what she said! If I must be sold, or all the people on the place, and everything go to rack, why, let me be sold. I s'pose I can b'ar it as well as any on 'em.

(Stowe, 34)

Recognizing the harm that he has been told would come to the community of slaves on the Shelby plantation, Tom chooses not to run with Eliza but rather accept the card that has been dealt him. His choice is equivalent to that of jumping on a grenade to protect one's fellow comrade in arms; however, since Tom's stares down an unknown quietly and with a quiet dignity rather than death in its more spectacular form, the heroism of his decision is often missed. It is also important to note that Tom is not philosophically opposed to the concept of running away; he rightly claims that it would be unnatural for Eliza to stay and be separated from her children. And in essence, this is what Tom is staying for; he is making a valiant attempt to save the integrity of as many slave families as he is able, most importantly that of his own. Stowe is, without many of her readers even recognizing it, playing into a language of masculinity as defender of the family while suggesting that methods other than armed resistance, which, it might be added often ended in mass retaliation against the black community, are equally powerful.

In the evening before Tom is taken from his family, the reader is allowed access to the inner sanctum of the home. As witnesses to both this final farewell and Eliza's exit,

it is clear that Tom's concern for his family mirrors that of Eliza's even though he is propelled to a very different set of actions. Having determined not to flee, Tom

turned to the rough trundle-bed full of little wooly heads, and broke fairly down. He leaned over the back of the chair, and covered his face with his large hands. Sobs, heavy, hoarse, and loud shook the chair, and great tears fell through the fingers on the floor; just such tears, sir, as you dropped into the coffin where you lay your first-born son; such tears, woman, as you shed when you heard the cries of your dying babe. For sir, he was a man, - and you are but another man. And, woman, through dressed in silk and jewels, you are but a woman, and, in life's great straits and might griefs, ye feel but one in sorrow.

(Stowe, 34-35)

Clearly, Tom is a man who has made strong connections with his children and his wife as well as those who have toiled with him on the Shelby plantation. He sees himself, not as an individual, but as a member of a family and a community. Much has been made of the racist nature of the title Uncle given to Tom, however, it is important to note that his fellow slaves use it, not disparagingly, but as a sign of respect. His role as protector of his extended slave family is what gives him the courage to make the ultimate sacrifice.<sup>38</sup>

Unlike what is seen in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, another rendering of what it means to be both an African American and a man, Stowe chooses to link manhood with community, fraternity and family.<sup>39</sup> This idea, although incomplete in the *Narrative*, will be seen later in Douglass's work. There are hints of it in "The Heroic Slave" as if Douglass wants to leave a space for masculine gentleness but, given the totality of what he is fighting, needs to emphasize African American male strength.

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<sup>38</sup> Additionally, in Stowe, it is emotion, both masculine and feminine, that makes us truly human.

<sup>39</sup> Douglass, we will see, also links these concepts to masculinity but does so in very different ways.

According to historian Edward E. Baptist, Tzvetan Todorov's work suggests that the unwillingness of individuals living under totalitarian regimes to relinquish community connections was a sign of rebellion.

“Todorov identified two kinds of ordinary virtue that also flowered in the course of forced migration in the United States: dignity and caring. Enslaved men displayed dignity while subjecting their own acts to a higher moral code. They also carried out actions of caring. And while Western societies have traditionally associated heroism with masculinity, and caring with femininity, it does not follow that enslaved men considered caring feminine. Although depicted as objects stripped of claims to masculinity, many enslaved men stubbornly demonstrated through acts of caretaking and dignity that they believed their own lives and identities mattered, and that they had choices and will.

(Baptist, 147)

As Baptist suggests here, the research done by Todorov on the Russian gulag has importance for understanding many of the decisions made by ordinary individuals living under the not wholly dissimilar slave system. Many scholars have attempted to understand why there were so few wide spread rebellions against the slaveocracy; nonetheless, understandings about the nature of community-building under totalitarian regimes adds meaning to the moments of caring shared between fellow victims. This research, that has benefited historical scholarship on the life of slaves on American plantations, can also add to our understanding of Stowe's novel.

The insight that we gain in the early portion of the novel will be important in unraveling the meaning of Uncle Tom's subsequent experience on the Legree plantation. Reading about Tom's final weeks and days, it is absolutely necessary to remember what motivates him. Perhaps, Tom had too great a belief in the goodness and honor of the Shelby family or even a naïve understanding of the relationship between slaves and

masters, but he is not motivated by a desire to protect them. Rather, his motivation is to do what will best benefit the community of slaves that he lives and works with; Uncle Tom understands his duty, a term which he often uses in the novel, to be to God, as a good Christian, and to those with whom he loves and labors.

Stowe's depiction of Legree's plantation is an attempt to represent the most oppressive form of slavery found in the United States. Cynthia Griffin Wolff suggests that Legree represents the furthest reach of aggressive, self-serving masculinity while Tom is an example of "communal, benevolent masculinity" (611). While Wolff recognizes the critique of Legree, she does not note the effect that the confrontation of these two masculinities have on the rest of the cast of the plantation. Legree, who lives virtually alone with no companion other than those who he forcibly binds to himself, does everything in his power to disrupt the building of community on his plantation. One of the most egregious examples of this is his decision to choose slaves to work as overseers baiting them to exact the most vicious punishments for the simplest of perceived offenses. The character of Sambo and Quimbo represent the loss of both humanity and any recognizable masculinity; it is these two characters that have been, in the language of so many critics of the text, fully emasculated. Violent and cruel, Sambo and Quimbo do nothing of their own accord; they are as much a slave to the whims of their master as the slaves whose backs they whip. If any individuals have been completely bent to their master's will, it is these two. Legree purchases Tom in order to train him to be another overseer on the plantation; his decision not to capitulate upends the entire system that Legree has put in place.

In order to understand the full nature of Tom's rebellion, it is important to look closely at the inner decision-making process that he undergoes. Multiple critics have complained that Uncle Tom does not develop over the course of the novel. "As Tompkins says, characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* do not change or develop... They are not defined primarily by their mental and emotional characteristics- that is to say, psychologically – but soteriologically, according to whether they are saved or damned" (Bellin, 212). The theme of salvation has so marked readings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that it has been easy to miss the radical material rebellion that Tom's decision creates on the Legree plantation. While it is clear that the conversion narrative is useful for understanding the experiences of Sambo and Quimbo, it does not explain the material changes that occur for the rest of the plantation. And while, it might be claimed, that Stowe relies heavily on a kind of *Deus ex machina* ending when she brings the young Shelby back into the picture, it may also, rightly, be argued that Stowe is attempting to return readers to the Shelby perspective in order to engage in a kind of missionary effort for the abolitionist cause. In this, her work would not be all that different from that of Frederick Douglass' use of Mr. Listwell to encourage the support of whites in the abolitionist cause. As in the case of Madison Washington, the work of material change has already begun with Tom's decision to remain an agent unto himself. The work may be strengthened through the support of white sympathizers but it does not wait for them, another misreading of the character of Uncle Tom.

In her article "Critiques from Within: Antebellum Projects of Resistance," Maggie Sale argues that throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "agency is generally assigned in proportion to whiteness" (701). This is simply not the case with Uncle Tom, one of

darkest skinned characters of the novel, and to categorize his experience in this way is to misread his motivations and remove the agency Stowe has invested him with; he cannot determine the conditions of his life but he makes a conscious choice to respond in ways that benefit those around him even to the point of self-sacrifice. It is this issue of agency that transforms Uncle Tom from passive acceptor of his fate to active resister. It is this active resistance that has the potential to enact change on the plantation.

While at the Shelby's, it might be claimed that Tom has not come to an awareness of the true nature of the slave system or the role that he plays in it. Yet, at Legree's plantation, Tom has to confront the problem of evil and the nature of slavery in terms that he has never before experienced. And this confrontation elicits a crisis of faith for Tom.

Stowe writes:

Is it strange that the religious peace and trust, which had upborne him hitherto, should give way to tossings of soul and despondent darkness? The gloomiest problem of this mysterious life was constantly before his eyes, - souls crushed and ruined, evil triumphant, and God silent. It was weeks and months that Tom wrestled, in his own soul, in darkness and sorrow.

(Stowe, 338)

While this crisis of faith is related to Tom's salvation, it is also a moment of complicated reexamination of all that he has understood to his point. It is the moment when he is forced to look into his soul and determine if the faith that he has clung to throughout his numerous ordeals is deserving of the tenacity to which he has engaged with it. It is important to note that it is not just Legree's cruelty that he has had to confront; he has seen first hand what has become of his fellow slaves as they have, in his mind, submitted to the ravages of the slave system. It is the degradation of his fellow slaves that most

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bothers him. The examples of Sambo and Quimbo stand before him and he has only recently heard of the lengths to which Cassy has gone to protect her child from being sold. He has seen the destruction of African American motherhood, family and community; now he must make a choice. He can participate in that destruction by becoming what Legree wishes for him to become, he can run or he can continue to refuse in hopes of giving others the strength to resist as well. It is on the opposite side of this inner struggle that Uncle Tom determines that he will not allow those who destroy his body destroy his inner being. His resistance is not to survive at any cost, for Tom mere survival is insufficient, but rather a refusal to allow an external force determine the kind of man he will become. This is, from the perspective of self-determination, a kind of radical masculinity; however, it is often misinterpreted because masculinity has traditionally been understood as exterior and physical rather than interior and metaphysical. It is a mistake to read his action as anything other than resistance; Uncle Tom has undertaken a battle with what he understands to be “evil” and chosen not to react in kind. Legree cannot make Tom an overseer nor can he force Tom to abandon those with whom he feels a kinship.

The option to run away is again presented to him; this time with Cassy and Emmeline. Given this opportunity for flight, Tom again chooses not to run. And, again, it is for the benefit of his fellow slaves that he chooses to remain. Again and again, even in the radical reorganizing of gender roles described in Stowe’s text, the man stands firm while the women and children run. It is neither cowardice nor inaction that keeps him on Legree’s plantation; rather, it is the strength he has developed and refined through his struggle with the divine. Where the decision to remain on the Shelby’s plantation to be

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sold forces him to face an uncertain future, here he faces almost certain death. His hope is, however, that his death can give his fellow slaves a sense of meaning, a hope of community, and the courage to realize it. He tells Cassy:

‘No,’ said Tom; time was when I would: but the Lord’s given me a work among these yer poor souls, and I’ll stay with ‘em and bear my cross with ‘em till the end. It’s different with you; it’s a snare to you- it is more ‘n you can stand, - and you’d better go, if you can’

(Stowe, 345)

Tom’s motivation for staying is rooted in his desire to minister – both spiritually and physically – to those slaves that have been broken by life on Legree’s plantation. He has abandoned hope that Master George will rescue him; he has no respect or concern for the finances of Simon Legree. He decides to stay because he believes that doing so will be a benefit to his fellow slaves; because, not unlike what little can be postulated about Nat Turner, he feels called by God to do a work that will help the slave community. It could rightly be said that seeing the power of slavery made raw, as it is on Legree’s plantation, has made a radical out of Tom. Juxtaposing this with some of the work done by Todorov is especially useful in this moment. His work suggests that those who played the role of community caregiver were willing to sacrifice their own lives for a fellow prisoner: Tom is doing exactly that.

His decision to stay is also the choice of one who feels empowered rather than weakened. His statement to Cassy that “it’s a snare to you” is a reference to her desire to murder Legree as revenge for all of the horrors that he has inflicted on her as well as untold others. For Tom, not becoming as Legree, not resorting to violence to control the actions of others, is at the heart of his resistance. Having seen what life on Legree’s

plantation has done to her, Tom believes that Cassy can no longer remain. Prior to Tom's arrival, Cassy had survived by putting the need to survive above all else. We see this clearly in a conversation she has with Emmeline. Confronted with the horror of becoming Legree's next mistress, Emmeline begs Cassy to tell her what to do. She responds

‘What I’ve done. Do the best you can, - do what you must, - and make it up in hating and cursing.’  
‘He wanted to make me drink some of his hateful brandy,’ said Emmeline; ‘and I hate it so – ‘  
‘You’d better drink,’ said Cassy. ‘I hated it, too, and now I can’t live without it. One must have something; - things don’t look so dreadful, when you take that.’  
‘Mother used to tell me never to touch any such thing,’ said Emmeline.  
‘*Mother* told you!’ said Cassy, with a thrilling and bitter emphasis on the word *mother*. ‘What use is it for mothers to say anything? You are all to be bought and paid for, and your souls belong to whoever gets you. That’s the way it goes. I say, *drink* brandy; drink all you can, and it’ll make things come easier.’<sup>40</sup>

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In this short conversation, we see the way in which Cassy has survived by allowing herself to lose touch with those parts of herself that rebel at the abuse she has suffered. Rather than hold firm to the person that she was, the person whose loss she clearly grieves, she uses alcohol to silence her pain.<sup>41</sup> And this allows her to participate in activities that she would otherwise rebel against. While she maintains a level of control over Legree, she does so at a price to her own sensibilities. And in this sense, Cassy had become a victim rather than a survivor. Tom recognizes this and it is this understanding that prompts him to agree with Cassy that she “better go, if you can.”

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<sup>40</sup> Note that Cassy is not able to protect Emmeline nor was she able to protect her own child. It is through Tom's masculine sacrifice that this work will be affected maintaining the traditional protector role as head of this household of slaves.

<sup>41</sup> Stowe's was deeply connected to the temperance movement.

In light of this relationship, it is important to look closely at Cassy's request to have Uncle Tom murder Legree. Cassy claims that she is physically unable to do so but the strength she shows while working in the fields suggests otherwise. Rather, it is more likely, that, as she has with Emmeline, Cassy is suggesting to Tom an alternative kind of resistance. Again Tom refuses, not because he is afraid or because he is incapable, but because murdering Legree is at odds with Uncle Tom's vision for the kind of resistance he is engaged in. Tom refuses to let Legree dictate his actions or to force his hands. He chooses not to make the kind of hateful choice Legree seems to be baiting him towards. Tom will choose his own path, his own resistance, even if that resistance ends with his own death.

It is this concern for his fellow slaves that keeps Tom on the plantation; prior even to his discussions with Cassy. Although confronted with the almost surety of his own demise, Tom remains on the plantation in an attempt to defend and protect those who are unable to do so themselves. In addition to aiding Cassy and Emmeline in their escape, Tom helps field hands who are unable to make the day's high production standards. He also provides an example of potential responses to the damning influence of Simon Legree. His refusal to submit to Legree's demands forces Sambo and Quimbo to reexamine their participation in the running of the plantation; the effect of this is to undercut the very process that Legree uses to maintain control over his slave population. The long term material benefit of this is immeasurable in the lives of those who have been held prisoner by Legree. Tom even refuses to harm a fellow slave, even if that slave is being used as a tool of the master to do him great harm.

Once the rationale and effects of Uncle Tom's decision making are understood, it becomes clear that those who find fault with the depiction of Tom's final sacrifice have been critiquing Stowe's concept of masculinity rather than her depiction of race. In part, no doubt, because of the way black masculinity was repeatedly denied, Stowe's desire to use Tom to not only critique slavery but certain forms of manliness have created confusion in the minds of many who have attempted to unravel the message found in her titular character's final moments. However, it seems not to have been missed by those closest to her argument in both time and position.

Traditionally, Douglass's only foray into fiction, "The Heroic Slave," has been seen as a response to portrayal of Uncle Tom in Stowe's novel. Frederick Douglass's only work of fiction was composed shortly after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and responds to both Stowe's visions of revolutionary action and black manhood that she has endowed her title character. The work of Frederick Douglass was, of itself, responsible for many of the characterizations of slavery as his *Narrative* was part and parcel of her research on the book. As such, it is important to consider this work as part of an ongoing conversation between the two author-activists. Levine has argued that Douglass's 1853 novella *The Heroic Slave* is 'an allegory of Douglass' relationship to Stowe, particularly if we take Listwell's overhearing of Washington's soliloquy and subsequent conversion to antislavery as analogous to Stowe's reading of Douglass's *Narrative* and eventual authoring of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*' (83). As such, Douglass's response to Stowe is to request that she continue to 'listen well' as he describes to her the kind of African American masculinity necessary to subvert the patriarchal form of slavery engaged in throughout the South.

A reading of “The Heroic Slave” that takes into account issues of masculinity opens up a door for understanding the decision Douglass eventually makes to abandon the fight for universal suffrage in order to prioritize universal male suffrage. What Douglass does in this novel is not a challenge to Stowe’s portrayal of race but, rather, her portrayal of masculinity. Stowe had, in her attempt to comment on the failures of traditional masculinity, created a male hero so indebted to the characterization of the feminine Christ as to wipe away all traits that would be recognized as based in material reality rather than the realm of the spirit. Douglass, who was himself concerned with issues of masculinity, used his character, Washington Madison, to both critique Stowe’s novel and produce an alternative vision of black manhood. Given the prejudices against African Americans at the time, it is clear that the development of Douglass’ activism followed from his realization that male slaves would not be recognized as fully human until they could prove their manhood. To attempt to prove humanity in a genderless vacuum proved too difficult for individuals already trapped by overlapping negative stereotypes. Douglass’s character does suggest a type of manhood more closely related to Northern visions of egalitarianism than those of Southern patriarchy; however, it roots itself in something that is recognizable as masculine and, by extension, fully human. Stowe was attempting to write a man who had transcended gender; Douglass believed that slaves needed to be recognized as men before they could transcend anything. The desire to be accepted, not as a genderless human, but rather as a fully recognizable man causes Douglass to write a hero who is fully masculine while at the same time attempting to redefine the limits of masculinity as it is understood by the white power structure.

Like Stowe, Douglass describes the protagonist of *The Heroic Slave* in glowing terms, both physically and intellectually. Madison Washington is a strong, broad-shouldered black man who “had be been born in another station of life...would have risen to the levels of statesman” (179). However, denied access to the public sphere Washington finds a pulpit only within a “dark pine forest” (176). Like women of the day, Washington’s voice is confined only to the private sphere. Unlike women, his voice has no resonance in his own home due to his status as slave; rather, he is only able to pour out his heart and intellect within the stillness of the forest. He remains unaware that his words are heard by a sympathetic, white passerby. It is through this passerby that we, as readers, are made aware of Washington’s actions; however, unlike other renderings of slavery by whites, Washington remains both the protagonist and hero of his own story.

Like Uncle Tom, Madison Washington is confronted with a choice that requires him to weigh the effects of his actions against the possibility of attaining freedom. Like Casey, Washington fears that remaining captive to a master who hates him for his intellectual superiority will propel him to self-destructive violence. As he considers his options, he muses “Liberty I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it” (Heroic, Griffith, 178) – and then, on the same page – “Tom escaped; so can I” (Heroic, 178). Knowing that this text is a deliberate response to Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the decision to call the escaped slave Tom cannot be anything but deliberate. These lines suggest that, unlike many modern day scholars, Douglass viewed Tom’s actions as a type of escape from slavery and a way of retaining his manhood through his refusal to submit to Legree. Arguably, Douglass does not suggest that Uncle Tom is incorrect in his motivations but, rather, that routes outside of martyrdom exist and should be actively pursued.

Madison Washington also mimics Uncle Tom's thought process when he considers the effects that his choices will have on his wife. Although he desires to make the attempt to flee, he bemoans the situation that will create for his wife. "Fitfully, he would exclaim, 'How can I leave her? Poor thing! What can she do when I am gone? Oh! Oh! 'tis impossible that I can leave poor Susan!'" (Heroic, 180). Unlike his *Narrative*, in these lines, Douglass explores the complex realities that familial ties created for slaves who wished to revolt by stealing themselves away to freedom. Understanding that slaves, while desirous of freedom, might still have concerns or attachments that would reflect in their actions is an important part of the way Douglass draws his character. This too is a reflection of Stowe's description of Uncle Tom. However, unlike Stowe's character, Madison Washington eventually makes a calculated decision to flee. He does so with the determination to use freedom to secure the resources he will need to bring the rest of his family northward. Tom stays to protect those he loves; Washington flees in order to provide them with the possibility of a better life.

The response from Listwell, a white narrator and the spectator to Washington's forest pleadings, suggests that Douglass now would like to teach sympathetic whites what their role should be in the battle against slavery while also offering them a revised version of African American manhood, a response to the vision of the supplicating slave seen so often in abolitionist propaganda. It is from this point on, after hearing Washington voice his resolve and dedication to self-liberation, that Listwell becomes an abolitionist. Pointedly, it is not seeing the brutality of slavery nor reading the pleadings of Northern whites that causes Listwell to convert. It is hearing the resolve of the slave, recognizing both the manhood and strength of the individual before him that spurs him to

action. Douglass recognized that slaves need the support of the white community but they do not desire pity.

From this point on, the narrative follows Listwell's time line, for it is from him that we learn the truth about Madison Washington, and yet, Listwell remains the narrator rather than becoming the protagonist. Listwell will offer financial and material support at appropriate junctures in the story but his telling of events does nothing to gain Washington his freedom. Instead, Washington claims his own freedom with the limited, yet important, support of those who are aware of his struggle. It would, of course, be ridiculous to suggest that Douglass was chiding white abolitionists for raising awareness of the horrors of slavery; Douglass himself was engaged in such work. Rather, it is important to note that Douglass is asking allies to consider their actions and revisit how they prioritize and engage in their efforts. He is not attempting to silence outsiders – the story is based on the work of a white narrator – but he is suggesting that African American's be allowed to lead and direct the actions of abolition as it is their freedom that is being secured.

Our narrator next encounters Washington years later when, during a terrible winter storm, he knocks on the Listwell's cabin door in the twilight hours. Before even answering the door, Listwell explains that he was confident in the safety of himself and his family for two important reasons. First, "thieves are too lazy and self-indulgent to expose themselves to this biting" and second, his dog, Monte is undisturbed by the nighttime visitor (Heroic, 183). These are important details for a couple of reasons not the least of which is that to suggest that African American men do not need to be feared for merely being African American men. It also points out that, much as Douglass had

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repeatedly noted in his books, speeches, and even his letter to Auld, he had both stolen and not stolen his person when he escaped from slavery. While under the law, Douglass was a thief, he was, as he would later argue, under the Constitution, a free man. Slaves who secreted themselves away could not be thieves though they may break the unjust property laws that supported Southern business. Escape was not only brave but it was honorable.

Although easy to overlook, the description of Listwell's dog is also an important detail in this story. Douglass had argued in his speech, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" that "When the dogs in your street, when the fowls of the air, when the cattle on your hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl, shall be unable to distinguish the slave from a brute, then will I argue with you that a slave is a man" (*Selected*, 195). Listwell's dog not only recognizes Washington as a man, not a brute, but he is not concerned about the runaway's intentions suggesting that Washington is honorable as well.

It is here that Washington's voice takes over as he describes the events that have led him to the Listwell's door. Listwell does not summarize the events but rather relates them word-for-word as Washington told him, again allowing the enslaved man to retain his own voice. Importantly to Douglass's project, Washington, unlike Tom, speaks Standard English showing the author linked not only physical strength but education with manliness. Washington then relates a story of his eventual escape from the plantation where he was held prisoner. This escape takes a great deal of time, suffers from a variety of setbacks, and illuminates the various possibilities available to a slave aside from flight

northward. The last possibility is important because it confronts the idea that salvation, for the slave, lies only in the hands of kind-hearted Northerners

In the dark of night, Madison Washington left his home and family “consoling myself with the reflection that once I was free, I could, possibly, devise ways and means to gain their freedom also” (Heroic, 189). While determined to head North, Washington encounters bad weather that “prevented me from seeing the North Star, which I had trusted as my guide, not dreaming that clouds might intervene between us” (Heroic, 189) and, instead, winds up back on his master’s grounds. At that point, he is out of supplies and unsure of his next move. He is unwilling to go to the slave quarters for help “—for where there is seeming contentment with slavery, there is certain treachery to freedom” (Heroic, 190) and Washington is resolved to remain free.<sup>42</sup> His resolve, in the mist of such trying circumstances is impressive, and of a kin with the soldiers who stood firm at Valley Forge. Instead of seeking help from fellow slaves, whose loyalties he is unsure of, Washington reaches out to his wife and, together, they determine a course of action. In this, Washington engages in the behavior of a husband and provider while taking into consideration the concerns of his wife. Interestingly, even though he originally ran three days earlier, he admits that “if I started for the North, I should leave a wife doubly dear to me,” a worry he had earlier silenced with dreams of a reunion in the North (Heroic, 192). According to Douglass, Washington’s change of tactic is caused through conversation with his wife; unfortunately, we do not know the totality of that conversation. The text reads only: “We mutually determined, therefore, that I should remain in the vicinity”

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<sup>42</sup> This dig at slaves who preferred the relative safety of the slave quarters to freedom were a common source of frustration in Douglass’s writing. He mentions them in his *Narrative* as well as his later autobiographies. And he lampoons them during the Civil War whenever suggestions were made the African Americans need not join in the fight.

(Heroic, 192). However, Douglass opens up the door, even just a crack, to the possibility of a black household in which the partners communicate their concerns, desires and ideas to one another in an attitude of respect. Here Douglass surpasses Stowe in his rendering of the caring partner; while Uncle Tom sacrifices himself for his family, Washington consults his wife before continuing ahead in his plans. This also is an interesting moment in that it suggests a kind of manly tenderness, like that associated with Tom, but does not show it in full, perhaps for fear of diminishing his other arguments regarding black manhood. These are private moment that Douglass chooses to leave private.

Accordingly, instead of heading North, “In the dismal swamps I lived, sir, five long years, --- a cave for my home during the day. I wandered about at night with the wolf and the bear, --- sustained by the promise that my good Susan would meet me in the pine woods at least once a week” (Heroic, 192). This next leg of Washington’s journey highlights a reality often missed in the abolitionist text and, even, slave narratives of the day. Many slaves who ran away did so only long enough to allow volatile situations to calm down a bit, as Douglass had when things became intolerable with Covey; others ran only as far as the swamps where they built maroon communities that frustrated and infuriated the white plantations they bordered.<sup>43</sup> Both of these rebellions took place without the support or organizing of abolitionists in the North suggesting that black slaves were capable of taking back their freedom, at least for a time, in ways unrecognized by many. Douglass highlights this here to demonstrate the strength of African American men and slave communities.

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<sup>43</sup> For more information on maroon communities, see Price, Richard. *Maroon Communities: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*. John Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Eventually, a fire starts in the swamp forcing Washington to flee. He wanders the countryside heading north as best he can under the circumstances. Two important ideas are highlighted by events that occur during that time which serve to outline and do away with some of the common barbs flung against African American men during the period. African American men who were not capable, through by law and tradition, of protecting their families and communities, also faced disparaging remarks about their manhood on the basis of these same injustices. Seen as thieves and scavengers who could not be trusted, they held no honor even among those sympathetic to their cause. Douglass uses Washington's flight to dispel the idea that black men, by nature, lacked any more integrity than any other group of men.

Douglass begins by attacking the idea that slaves are thieves by admitting that runaways, and potentially ill-fed others, do in fact take food where they can find it. This is not to be understood as common thievery but, rather, one of the only forms of resistance available to the individual slave. While Mrs. Listwell is concerned only that the food he has eaten was cooked, Listwell is curious how Washington was able to find sufficient food on his journey. Washington eloquently explains:

I have suffered little for want of food; but I need not tell you how I got it. Your moral code may differ from mine, as your customs and usages are different. The fact is, sir, during my flight, I felt myself robbed by society of all my just rights; that I was in an enemy's land, who sought both my life and my liberty. They had transformed me into a brute; made merchandise of my body, and, for all the purposes of my flight, turned night into day, -- and guided by my own necessities, and in contempt of their conventionalities, I did not scruple to take bread where I could get it"

(Heroic, 195).

Having had his labor stolen from him from his birth, Washington argues that the theft of sustenance is inconsequential compared to the larger issues at play. Forced into the wilderness with insufficient material to survive, who would begrudge the runaway food regardless of how it was attained? Interestingly, while Washington is confident in his reasoning, he is not proud of the necessity of his act. He does not desire to steal; he does so only because his ability to provide for himself has been taken from him rendering necessary behavior that would be dishonest in another setting. And Listwell quickly agrees with him citing a conversation with Gerrit Smith regarding the matter.

Washington's story provides another example of how slavery forces individuals into complicated ethical decisions that sometimes mean that dishonesty is the truly honorable position. He does so by describing an event that occurs as he moves north. He encounters a fellow slave who he petitions to bring him food with money Washington provides him. The slave goes to do so but, instead of returning with food, comes back with white slave hunters. Rather than being angry, Washington feels empathy for the old man as he believes the man was interrogated about where he came into money and "that the truthfulness of the old man's character compelled him to disclose the facts; and thus were these bloodthirsty men put on my track" (Heroic, 199). However, the old man's honesty does not just put Washington's life in jeopardy; it also has significant negative implications on his own. Unable to find Washington, who hid himself in the bough of a tree, the men fall upon their informant accusing him of lying to them.

They now took hold of him, and began to strip him; while others went to get sticks with which to beat him. I felt, at the moment, like rushing out in the midst of them; but considering that the old man would be whipped the more for having aided a fugitive slave, and that, perhaps in the *mêlée* he might be killed outright, I

disobeyed this impulse.

(Heroic, 200)

Washington desires to come to the old man's aide; it is his first response demonstrating both the compassion and integrity of his heart. Truly an honorable man, he does not wish for another to be punished on his account. However, knowing how the system of slavery truly works, he makes a calculation. As he believes that to come to the man's aide risks putting him in an even more precarious position, instead of alighting from his position in the tree, he remains hidden, forced to watch the terrible events unfold.

In addition to showing forth the difficult ethical choices that slaves had to confront, this incident demonstrates how these decisions could pit slaves against each other. In order to protect himself, the old man felt it necessary to tell the truth regarding where he came upon hard currency while Washington, in an effort to minimize the man's beating, was forced to allow the injustice to move forward. Much as he had exposed in his *Narrative*, Douglass shows how honesty, compassion and integrity might look very different in the slave quarters, not because it isn't prioritized but because it is manipulated by white slave owners. Consequently, honor is found, not with Southern white gentlemen, but with their chattel who daily attempt to make honorable discussion under the worst of circumstances. The revising of the concept of honor turns slaves into morally complex men while stripping white slaves holders of their honor, much as he had done in his letter to Auld.

Fully understanding the position that Madison Washington now finds himself in, Listwell determines to do exactly what Douglass is calling on all sympathetic whites to do. Rather than only doing the work of propaganda, those who are truly sympathetic to

the cause should provide a platform for slaves to tell their stories unencumbered by well-meaning white direct and engage in direct action against slavery. Upon hearing Washington's story, Listwell gives Madison a suit of clothes, sufficient money for his travels, and then secrets him on a boat heading to Canada. After providing direct service to Washington, it is explained that:

Mr. Listwell was deeply moved by the gratitude and friendship he had excited in a nature so noble as that of the fugitive. He went to his home that day with joy and gratification which knew no bounds. He had done something 'to deliver the spoiled out of the hands of the spoiler,' he had given bread to the hungry, and clothes to the naked; he had befriended a man to whom the laws of his country forbade all friendship, -- and in proportion to the odds against his righteous deed, was the delightful satisfaction that gladdened his heart. On reaching home, he exclaimed, '*He is safe, -- he is safe, -- he is safe,*' - and the cup of his joy was shared by his excellent lady.

(Heroic, 204)

Listwell's delight comes, not from the applause of other sympathetic whites or from a sense of martyrdom, but from the knowledge that he has, not only listened well, but done well. He does not merely "feel rightly," but he translates those feelings into very specific actions. Here Listwell overcomes the failing that so many scholars have rightly ascribed to Augustine St. Clair by translating his conviction that slavery is morally wrong into action that benefits the "man" who has been wronged by the "laws of his county" (Heroic, 204).<sup>44</sup> He also recognizes that his efforts have not been those associated with the "white man's burden" but that he has redeemed a man who has been treated unjustly by the very laws that uphold his nation. He considers Washington his friend and is grateful to be able to count one so "noble" among his associates.

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<sup>44</sup> For more on Augustine St. Clair's failed masculinity, see Wolff, Cynthia Griffin. "'Masculinity' in Uncle Tom's Cabin." *American Quarterly*. 47.4 (Dec., 1995), pp. 595-618.

In addition to being important commentary on appropriate behavior in such issues, Douglass also reflects upon what he believed to be the proper the relationship between spouses as well as the correct type of emotional appeal that would also have the greatest effect on readers. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe also writes an escape scene; however, in her rendering of events it is the wife that propels the couple to action based on strong appeals to pity and charity. Here it is the husband that engages in action in order to rectify an injustice that has been perpetrated against an honorable and respectable man. This is not to say that Listwell is not propelled into action by emotion but, rather, that the emotion which causes him to act is linked to a respect among equals and not a savior complex. This is an incredibly important distinction suggesting that Douglass places emphasis on the emotional rationales for action in the fight against slavery. While he gladly accepts the support of any and all, Douglass found ways to gently, and not so gently, nudge white abolitionist to rethink their relationship to African Americans and, more specifically, African American men.

Listwell, however, is not idealized in anyway. As the novella proceeds forward, the reader discovers that he too fails to consistently confront the danger associated with the abolitionist cause. In a complex, ethical moment, Listwell will, through his silence, deny any association with the radical cause. Years after helping Washington escape to Canada, Listwell heads to the South for a business transaction. Staying at an inn, he makes the acquaintance of the kind of men who hang out at a tavern waiting to pick up on the news of the day. After providing Listwell with some information about the area, “the loafer gave Mr. Listwell as significant grin, which expressed a sort of triumphant pleasure of having, as he supposed, by his tact succeeding in placing so fine appearing a

gentleman under obligation to him” (Heroic, 201). Seeing as we are moments later reintroduced to Washington, again in chains, it is clear that Douglass is asking us to note the striking comparison. While Washington remains noble, even enslaved, these local stool warmers, have very little to recommend them. They benefit no one and are always on the lookout for a way to make a fast buck. Washington, though black and enslaved, remains, clearly, the superior man.

As the local loafers watch Listwell enter the inn, they debate whether he is a slave trader or an abolitionist. It is not readily apparent to the Southerners, nor would it be apparent to the average slave, the motivations or intentions of Northern gentlemen. The North had spent so much time playing the fence that what was deemed acceptable gentlemanly behavior could be manifest by individuals on both sides of the abolitionist question. One could be deemed a gentleman and harbor pro-slavery ideas; this was, of course, anathema to Douglass’s vision of true manhood. He writes: “The dispute as to *who* Mr. Listwell was, what his business, where he was going, etc., was kept up with much animation for some time, and more than once threatened a serious disturbance of the peace” (Heroic, 212). In these lines, Douglass suggests that the performance of gentlemanly behavior does not a gentleman make and, as such, he unmasks the reality of white performance of gentlemanly behavior, unconnected to true honor or integrity, even in the North. This unmasking places the complex integrity of the enslaved man head and shoulders above the simpering Northerner who panders to the Southern aristocracy.

And yet, while Listwell is, in fact, an abolitionist, he chooses to remain silent in a situation fraught with real danger to his person. Much as Paul had denied Christ thrice,

Listwell refuse to subject himself to the bodily harm which slaves continually face. He rationalizes it thusly:

While he would not avow himself a purchaser of slaves, he deemed it not prudent to disavow it. He felt that he might, properly, refuse to cast such a pearl before parties which, to him, were worse than swine. To reveal himself, and to impart knowledge of his real character and sentiments would, to say the least, be imparting it and himself both to abuse. Mr. Listwell confesses, that this reasoning did not altogether satisfy his conscience, for hating slavery as he did, and regarding it to be the immediate duty of every man to cry out against it, 'without compromise and without concealment,' it was hard for him to admit to himself the possibility of circumstances wherein a man might, properly, hold his tongue on the subject. Having as little of the spirit of a martyr as Erasmus, he concluded, like the latter, that it was wiser to trust the mercy of God for his soul, than the humanity of slave-traders for his body. Bodily fear, not conscientious scruples, prevailed.

(Heroic, 214).

It is clear that Listwell is not all together comfortable with his decision to remain silent. He knows that speaking up, much like Washington knew as he sat in the tree and watched the old man be beaten, will put him in harm's way without much positive good. His fear of "casting pearls before swine" comes off sounding hollow; instead, it is clear that he fears "those who can kill the body." White men who preached non-violence often did not understand the true risks and, if they did, were not placing themselves in the same kind of danger that black men faced every day. In this case, Listwell responds in a way that black men are often criticized for. A comparison between Listwell's actions here and Washington's actions while he sat in the tree leave Listwell lacking. Washington's rationale rings true; Listwell's excuse is not much more than a cover.

These lines also point to another very real and very important criticism of white-led abolition. While Northern abolitionists could call for non-violence, they did not have

to face the real risk that slaves did in refusing to submit. They had the luxury – today, we would call it white privilege – to remain safely removed from physical harm. This is not to suggest that all did, but, rather that Douglass feels it important to show that they were able to if they choose.

In comparison, when we finally meet Washington again, we find him attached to a slave coffle having been recaptured in attempting to rescue his wife. No mention is made of his two children but, given the realities of slavery, one can assume that they have been sold for a profit. Yet, even in these dire circumstances, his manhood shines forth. He “had already won the confidence of the gang, and was a sort of general-in-chief among them” (Heroic, 218). The slave traders, however, are “a horrid trio, well fitted for their demonical work. Their uncombed hair came down over their foreheads ‘*villainously low,*’ with eyes, mouths, and noses to match” (Heroic, 218). Building on the phrenology that had been used to discredit the intelligence of African Americans, Douglass describes the slave traders as “demonic.” This again places Washington in the position, not of incapable victim, but wronged and unjustly treated man.

When Listwell learns of the latest tragedy in Washington’s life, he offers to purchase his freedom. He is told that “’O no, sir! I was sold on condition of my being taken South. Their motive is revenge” (Heroic, 221). Clearly, economic motivation is not always the primary one in these situations. Madison Washington attacked the slaveholder’s manhood by attempting to liberate his wife suggesting that he could take better care of her than a white man. This insult to the honor of the slaveholder must, therefore, be punished. And the best way to do this is to sell the offending man further south.

Listwell determines then to provide Washington with materials that might allow him to escape from his captors. He is unwilling to put himself in harms way to ensure the freedom of his friend but he does all else that he knows to do. Douglass describes the last scene between Listwell and Washington thusly:

Mr. Listwell stood on the shore, and watched the slaver till the last speck of her upper sails faded from sight, and announced the limit of human vision. 'Farewell! Farewell! brave and true man! God grant that brighter skies may smile upon your future than have yet looked down upon your thorny pathway.' Saying this to himself, our friend lost no time in completing his business, and in making his way homewards, gladly shaking off from his feet the dust of Old Virginia.

(Heroic, 224)

Although the novella's narrator has provided the protagonist with two files and some money, he has left the captured man to his own devices. While Washington is unwilling to remain in relative freedom in Canada while those he loves remain enslaved, Listwell heads North, to safety and freedom, with a quick prayer "gladly shaking off from his feet the dust of Old Virginia" (Heroic, 224). While Listwell was willing to intervene more directly when in the relative safety of the North, he is unwilling to do so again in the South. Clearly, Douglass' takes this opportunity to both demonstrate the courage and strength of African American men while pointedly criticizing the level of commitment he finds among Northern abolitionists. Madison Washington is the superior, more courageous gentleman; Listwell, while a good guy, does not rise to the strength of character and manly fortitude that we see in his African American friend.

It is not until much later that we learn what has become of our hero, Madison Washington. Douglass relates the rest of his story by giving the role of narrator to a Southern sailor and slaver. He does this to demonstrate the power of Washington's

manhood to convert the seemingly inconvertible to the reality of his nobility and honor. Grant, in conversation with other Southern gentlemen, explains that Madison Washington led a rebellion on board the ship taking him further South. Those to whom Grant tells the story are appalled that such a thing could occur and chastise him for not maintaining better control of his charges. They challenge his use of weaponry suggesting that guns only invite attack as they “tell him (a *nigger*) that you are afraid of him” (Heroic, 227). A black man, like an animal, does not need military weaponry to control him, according to these individuals, as it will only suggest to him that he is one’s physical equal. A whip should be sufficient. Grant then explains to his companions why, aboard a ship, events might transpire that would not on land. He notes:

It is quite easy to talk of flogging niggers here on land, where you have the sympathy of the community, and the whole physical force of the government, State and national, at your command; and where, if a negro shall lift his hand against a white man, the whole community, with one accord are ready to unite in shooting him down.... It is one thing to manage a company of slaves on a Virginia plantation, and quite another thing to quell an insurrection on the lonely billows of the Atlantic, where every breeze speaks of courage and liberty. For the negro to act cowardly on shore, may be to act wisely; and I’ve some doubts whether *you*, Mr. Williams, would find it very convenient were you a slave in Algiers, to raise your hand against the bayonets of a whole government.<sup>45</sup>

(Heroic, 227)

It is important that these words come from a slave trader because he, especially, would be intimately aware of the realities of the use of disciplinary tactics on slave communities. He acknowledges that to refrain from revolution on land is to “act wisely,” thus validating the truth of some of Washington’s earlier statements. To revolt on land means taking on, not only an individual master or driver, but the whole of an economic, social

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<sup>45</sup> Douglass’s decision not to back John Brown for logistical reasons followed by his call for a general slave revolt during the Civil war is an excellent example of this idea in action in the author’s life.

and legal system that conspires against you and your community. Outright rebellion under these conditions may be more foolhardy than brave; but, at sea, where the battle is once again reduce to one-against-one, rebellion appears to be a viable option. As Douglass had taken his chance against the slave breaker Covey, backed by the assurance that his pride would silence him in the public sphere, so too does Washington make his attempt at sea where the odds are evened. Importantly, in both cases, it is the black man who comes out victor. When challenged about his own manhood and his role in the rebellion, Grant explains; “In that, too... you were mistaken. I did all that any man with equal strength and presence of mind could have done. The fact is, Mr. Williams, you underrate the courage as well as the skill of these negroes, and further, you do not seem to have been correctly informed about the case at hand” (Heroic, 231).

Grant proceeds from this point to describe the leader of the rebellion, Madison Washington, to his colleagues in almost glowing terms. It is possible while reading his description to forget that Washington is, in fact, the man that has humbled him in battle. Due to the powerful nature of his words, it is appropriate to quote at some length the actual language Grant uses in order to fully appreciate the fact that he both recognizes and honors Washington’s manhood. He represents his enemy by stating the following:

The leader of the mutiny in question was just as shrewd a fellow as ever I met in my life, and was as well fitted to lead in a dangerous enterprise as any one white man in ten thousand. The name of this man, strange to say, (ominous of greatness) was MADISON WASHINGTON. In the short time he had been on board, he had secured the confidence of every office. The negroes fairly worshipped him. His manner and bearing were such that no one could suspect him of a murderous purpose. The only feeling with which we regarded him was, that he was a powerful, good-disposed negro. He seldom spoke to any one, and when he did speak, it was with the utmost propriety. His words were well chosen, and his pronunciation equal to that of any schoolmaster. It was a mystery to us

*where* he got his knowledge of language; but as little was said to him, none of us knew the extent of his intelligence and ability till it was too late. It seems he brought three files with him on board, and must have gone to work upon his fetters the first night out; and he must have worked well at that; for on the day of the rising, he got the irons *off eighteen* besides himself.

(Heroic, 232-233)

Some of the most important descriptors that Grant uses in this portion of the text include references to Washington's intellect and ability. He is "shrewd," "powerful," well-spoken, and "intelligent" in addition to be physically strong and agile. He had the respect and trust of both his fellow negroes and the white men onboard. All who knew him easily recognized his ability and his character, even those who would keep him in chains. Douglass links Washington's worth as a man to both his physical strength and courage and his intellectual prowess much as he did for himself in his *Narrative* by twinning the fight with Covey and his learning to read. To be truly respected as a gentleman, one needs to be able to defend oneself physically and intellectually. One needs to be able to work hard physically and produce intellectual labor. And here, unlike Babo in Melville's *Benito Cereno*, the praise is well deserved and a true representation of his character. It is because this is an accurate representation that his rebellion can be seen as a fight for freedom rather than criminal or some other type of unjustified attack. Even in the midst of the attack, when Captain decries Washington as a "murderous villain," the black patriot can exclaim "God is my witness that LIBERTY, not *malice*, is the motive for this night's work" (Douglass, 234-235). As proof of that, Washington repeatedly spares the life of crew members rather than engaging in a scorched earth program. Again, unlike Babo, he instructs his fellow slaves to protect the remaining sailors after the ship has been taken. Unlike the master who sold him South, it is freedom that Washington desires, not

revenge. In an impassioned speech, proving both his intellectual and tactical superiority, he exclaims:

‘Men! the battle is over, -- your captain is dead. I have complete command of this vessel. All resistance to my authority will be in vain. My men have won their liberty, with no other weapons but their own **BROKEN FETTERS**. We are nineteen in number. We do not thirst for your blood, we demand only our rightful freedom. Do not flatter yourselves that I am ignorant of chart or compass. I know both. We are now only about sixty miles for Nassau. Come down, and do your duty. Land us in Nassau, and not a hair of your heads shall be hurt.

(Heroic, 235)

In the language of a freedom fighter, Douglass delineates the parameters of acceptable violence. Having secured his freedom and that of his fellow enslaved community, Washington has no desire for bloodshed. His enemies, although they outnumber him, fear his small band of rebels; Washington recognizes his advantage and chooses not to press it requesting only to be allowed freedom in Nassau. In other words, he fights honorably creating a situation in which his enemies are defeated but not humiliated.<sup>46</sup>

It is also worthy of note that Douglass has Washington request to be released in Nassau. Stowe ends her novel with the remaining characters headed, as missionaries, back to Liberia. Douglass, like many other African American abolitionists, had actively spoken against the colonization of freed slaves to Africa. Many in the community saw this as an impulse to ensure that Anglo-Americans no longer had to contend with African Americans.<sup>47</sup> The Bahamas, however, had been the location of multiple slave rebellions.

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<sup>46</sup> Much of this is reminiscent of the manner in which Douglass had described his battle with the slave breaker Covey in his *Narrative*. Douglass describes both battles with a firm commitment to the ideals of a ‘fair fight.’

<sup>47</sup> Martin Delany is a notable exception. He was aware of the racism of the American Colonization Society but also believed that African American removal to Africa afforded former slaves and freedmen the best opportunities for progress.

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By taking Washington to Nassau, Douglass aligns him with this revolutionary spirit.

Rather than fleeing America, Douglass radicalizes Washington into the burgeoning Pan-African movement.

This last episode in Douglass' short story illuminates his belief that African Americans needed to begin to move forward in action rather than waiting for Anglo-Americans. Building on the tools that they had been given by white supporters, it was up to slave to free themselves. And as the nation moved ever closer to the Civil War, that is exactly what they did.

**Chapter III:  
Manly Defense: The Civil War as Defense of African American Manhood**

While the story of Crispus Attucks is well-known, few have heard the story of Nicholas Biddle, the self-proclaimed “first man wounded in the great American rebellion”<sup>48</sup> (Williams, 69). Only two days after the first shots were fired on Fort Sumter, Nicholas Biddle mustered out with his militia company, the Washington Artillerists, in order to lend support to the Union cause. What made this decision so compelling was that Biddle, a sixty-five-year-old former slave who had settled in Pennsylvania, was the only African American member of his company. Having been befriended by the local militia group, Biddle, who had borrowed his name from the wealthy industrialist and banker, rushed to join the war effort, throwing his support behind the Northern cause. When the militia arrived in Baltimore to catch a train to D.C., they marched past a pro-Confederate mob that began to jeer at the ‘Nigger in uniform.’ A projectile was thrown hitting Biddle on the check and cutting him to the bone. Lieutenant James Russell, a white man, caught him and delivered him to safety. This event marked Biddle as the first man wounded in the Civil War. However, on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1861, when his militia company was sworn in, Biddle was not allowed to register with the Union army as African Americans were barred from military service. And just like that, Nicholas Biddle walked into and then right out of history. Little is known of his later military service<sup>49</sup>; however, when he died, destitute, his friends engraved a monument to him that read:

IN MEMORY OF  
NICHOLAS BIDDLE  
*Died 2d Aug., 1876, aged 80 years,*  
His was the proud distinction of shedding the First Blood in

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<sup>48</sup> As noted on a *carte de visite* that Biddle used

<sup>49</sup> Biddle was eventually allowed to enlist as the policies regarding colored troops changed.

The Late War for The Union. Being wounded while  
marching through Baltimore with the First  
Volunteers from Schuylkill County,  
18<sup>th</sup> April, 1861

(Williams, 70)

Although much of Biddle's history is unwritten, there is a considerable amount of understanding that we can glean from what portions of his story remain. Nicholas Biddle's brief brush with the forces of history are indicative of a number of similar forces that impacted both the African American experience in the Civil War as well as the way in which that experience was remembered. Biddle, in some very important ways, represents what African American men desired when they enlisted in the Union army. As Douglass had described in his *Narrative*, Biddle too had stolen himself away to freedom in the North, an act that required a great deal of courage as well as the recognition of his own worth as an individual deserving of freedom. He had come to Philadelphia, taken for himself the name of a wealthy banking tycoon, and made a life for himself. It isn't unreasonable to assume that the name he chose for himself was one that he felt represented the most important qualities he aspired to nor is it unfair to claim that he saw himself as positioned for great success as he began his new life as a free man. No longer hampered by slavery, Biddle wanted a life for himself in Philadelphia where he could be recognized for the man that he knew himself to be.

It is also apparent from what little remains of his story that Biddle was able to find acceptance among a group of white men who allowed him to practice with the militia for twenty years before the onset of war. Biddle, who it must be assumed saw himself as a man and full citizen already, found acceptance within a small group of men there in Philadelphia. Those men allowed him to more fully demonstrate his commitment to the

nation through service in the militia. Although not officially a member due to the rules regulating African American service in militias, this group of men had given Biddle his own uniform and allowed him to drill with them suggesting a level of comradery and respect. Biddle had somehow built a community of individuals who allowed him to demonstrate his manhood through military drill and practice, an amazing accomplishment in the 1840s and 50s.<sup>50</sup> It is this acceptance into the community of men that so many African American's sought at the outset of the war as individuals pushed to be allowed to enlist and serve in the Union armed forces. And it was through the leveraging of this local community recognition of manhood, within companies and militias, that many African Americans hoped to gain national recognition through emancipation and the granting of full citizenship rights. This was, sadly, not to be. Participation in the defense of the nation, a responsibility that had been linked to citizenship rights since the American Revolution, proved insufficient to inspire recognition of African American manhood in the larger audience of white America.

As his memorial demonstrates, African Americans were, by and large, unable to gain the kind of recognition of the courage and manhood that they desired. When the war began, ex-slaves and freedman were not allowed to enlist in the Union army. Later, when these same men were finally allowed to enlist in an extremely controversial move, many of their fellow soldiers were suspicious of their ability and some went so far as to place the fault of the war at the feet of the African American community. African American troops were allowed to enlist as part of an experiment on the part of the Union army to bolster their flagging troops; these men were determined to build upon this opportunity to

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<sup>50</sup> It is unfortunate that much of Biddle's life story is lost to history as an understanding of how he found a place within a white militia would add much to our discussion.

demonstrate to a largely racist nation that they were men of bravery and courage. Even when African American soldiers fought courageously, especially given the treatment they received from both Northern and Southern armies, they were routinely denied fair pay for their service. Enlistment proved not to provide access to the benefits of full citizenship that so many, including Frederick Douglass, hoped it would be. Although many African American men served bravely in the Civil War, they came to be seen as exceptions in their communities rather than full fledged members. Biddle's example is a perfect type of this; while remembered by his friends, Biddle remained forgotten by the nation at large. Recognition of black manhood in battle did not translate into acceptance of African American manhood within the nation. After the failure of Radical Reconstruction, the ways in which African American men could demonstrate their manhood changed drastically and, with it, a reevaluation of how the story of colored troops would be told. As the story of military manhood came to be viewed with suspicion, especially in the post-war South, African American veterans used other means to convince white men of the truths that they already knew.

For years, following Reconstruction, the Civil War was described as either a battle over states rights that happened, as if by accident, to free the slaves or an example of the courage of white saviors who fought for the freedom of the captive, childlike blacks who were incapable of liberating themselves. Although the work of sociologist W.E.B. DuBois beautifully demonstrated the sacrifice and commitment of African Americans, the state's rights/white man's burden narrative held sway in the majority of the scholarship in the early portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually, works such as James McPherson's "The Negro's Civil War: How African American Blacks Felt and Acted

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During the War for the Union,” first published in 1965, began to look at the experience of blacks during the war – in the South and the North, free and slave, soldier and civilian – and, in doing so, began to uncover some of the very important ways in which the African American community forced Northern generals and politicians to use the war to abolish slavery, gradually arm African American men, and, ever so slowly, recognize the contributions blacks could make to the war effort. Working from this text and others like it, scholars have begun to recognize what DuBois had written in his seminal text, “Black Reconstruction in the America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880.”<sup>1</sup> Namely, scholarship has begun to uncover the contours and details of the manner in which African American men used the Civil War to manifest their inherent manhood in ways they hoped would garner them recognition in the national community. They left with the hope that by serving the Union cause they could prove their manhood to those in the North who were reluctant to afford them full citizenship in the nation. Eventually, however, these men came to the realization that their fellow men-at-arms did not understand black service through the same lens and that understanding forced African American soldiers to reevaluate their experience, drawing from it lessons regarding self-pride, community building, and preparation for the battle of Reconstruction and beyond. The writings and discussions regarding the Civil War created by former African American soldiers emphasized the preparation for freedom the war had given them rather than suggesting that citizenship had been guaranteed through that service alone. It also emphasized the skills of “respectable manhood” that had been gained rather than building on the image of “martial manhood” that already adhered to the life of a soldier. This change in the

discourse reflects the understanding of African Americans that their military service had not, in fact, earned them what they believed it would and that they needed to develop a particular kind of discourse to continue the battle for full acceptance within the nation.

It is through this lens, the reality of the African American Civil War experience followed by the dashing of dreams as the experiment in Radical Reconstruction ended, that the memoirs of Elijah Marris, a contraband soldier attached to the Twelfth U.S. Colored Artillery, should be read. Marris chooses his language very carefully in order to illustrate those experiences and lessons learned that will have the greatest political impact in the fight for full acceptance of African American citizenship in the Post-Reconstruction United States. Having realized, as many African Americans had, that military service had not demonstrated their manhood in the eyes of white America, Marris crafts an argument for black manhood that is built on a combination of physical strength, intellectual ability and common humanity. At the same time, he very carefully side steps much of the insulting treatment he would have endured as a colored soldier in the Union Army, replacing it, instead, with moments of comradery and bravery. Finally he emphasizes his natural humanity as well as his manhood to build a bridge between himself and his former masters, as well as other confederates, attempting to participate in the reconciliationist vision of the war while still holding open its emancipatory dream.

In his book, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, David Blight catalogs how, following the Jubilee and the fall of Radical Reconstruction, the narrative that prioritized the emancipatory goals of the war were subsumed in attempts to reconcile North and South. Rather than describe the war as a liberatory one in which the South and its laws and commitment to slavery were defeated, the war began to be

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understood as an epic battle in which soldiers on both sides behaved courageously. The recognition of honorable white manhood on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line pushed out any conversations that would include the recognition of African American manhood or honor.

The history of Memorial Day is a perfect example of this change in commitment. Originally celebrated in 1865 by former enslaved citizens to honor Union soldiers who had died in Confederate prisoner of war camps, it was known as Decoration Day. By 1890, it was celebrated in all Northern States to honor those who had died in the Civil War. Those in the former Confederacy refused to acknowledge Memorial Day, celebrating their own fallen soldiers separately, until World War I when the day came to be a celebration of all American soldiers in all wars thus removing any of its original political meaning. Gradually, the original meaning behind Decoration Day was lost and what became known as Memorial Day could be celebrated with the waving of Confederate flags alongside U.S. ones. Now, few recognize Memorial Day's link to Decoration Day and its history of celebrating emancipation.

Another excellent example of this change can be seen in the history of Civil War reunions. By 1913, veterans from both sides of the Civil War reunited at Gettysburg, the location where Lincoln announced the Emancipation of all slaves in the rebelling states, and celebrated the common courage and strength of both Union and Confederate soldiers. Individuals came dressed in their uniforms, waving flags of both the Union and the Confederacy, to celebrate the healing of old wounds. Speeches were given celebrating the shared manhood of soldiers from both the Union and the Confederacy. African American soldiers remained, for the most part, conspicuously absent, a testament to the fact that the

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bounds of white manhood could be strained but not broken as long as black manhood remained safely outside.

In 1885, when Marrs published his recollections, the 1913 reunion had not occurred nor had Memorial Day been adopted by the South. However, Reconstruction had failed, the North had abandoned any attempts to provide former slaves with fair restitution, and the rise of the K.K.K. and other conservative terrorist groups had begun in earnest. And so it may be no wonder that upon reading Elijah Marr's reflection regarding his service in the US military during the Civil War, one is immediately struck by the lack of emphasis he places on either military honor or heroics. Unlike the character in the novella by Stephen Crane, Mr. Marrs, a member of the Twelfth U.S. Colored Artillery (Company L – recruited out of Louisiana), does not choose to join the Union army for the express purpose of securing recognition for his efforts, nor does he go seeking any type of mythic test of heroism. Rather, his decision to join the Union army comes, in part, out of fear of local Confederate action and his knowledge that his position as letter reader and writer for much of the black population puts him at additional risk. Marrs' ability to both read and write made him a leader within his community and, effectively endowed him with power. Seizing upon the opportunities this afforded him, Marrs manifested his commitment to the African American community by acting as a unifier. As such, he was targeted by the Confederate cause and desired by the Union.

While Elijah supported the Union cause in principle, his decision to join up was influenced by a pragmatic measuring of both his own safety and his ability to best benefit the real individuals who made up his community. He enlists not for an ideal but because

of what Todorov has named “ordinary virtue”.<sup>51</sup> “Ordinary virtue” differs from “heroic virtue” in that it is manifested through the creation of communities of relief as a means of rebellion, rather than using more traditional forms of resistance. As such, it can often be overlooked. Given the particular conditions that Elijah Marris lived under, enlisting in the US army appeared to be the best option available to him; the way that he could continue to be a benefit to his family and community. He does not go to war expecting freedom to be granted from the Union army but rather he makes the determination to fight in order to secure the best possible future for himself. He sees himself as a fully formed man and leader who is making decisions to best benefit himself and his community. He already has his freedom, already sees himself as a powerful man. This is merely the next step in maintaining that power and securing legal recognition for the manhood he has already attained thereby attempting to invert the rhetoric of white supremacy.

This articulation of his motivation allows him to speak without hatred of his former master. Rather than a hatred of slavery, Marris is propelled by the possibility of a brighter future building upon the skills and knowledge he has learned from his former master. Describing his experience in this way allows Marris to demonstrate how slavery, the stain of which had become a rationale for disenfranchising African American men by 1885, taught him things that helped him to rise to a level acceptable to those in power. Although living and working under a legal system that denies him even personhood, Marris conceives of himself as a fully-formed individual who has learned and developed

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<sup>51</sup> See Chapter Two for more about Todorov’s understanding of “ordinary virtue.” Todorov’s study of Nazi death camps as well as the Russian gulag in *Facing the Extreme Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* looks at the various ways individuals respond to survival in the face of torture, degradation and death. Rather than emphasizing rebellion or acts of what might be deemed extraordinary heroism, Todorov looks at the ways in which individuals maintained their humanity, built communities of support and comfort, and created a nexus of survival through acts of “ordinary virtue.”

from his experiences. Marrs goes into great detail regarding the Christian education, including the ability to read and write, that was provided him as a slave, even going so far as to express gratitude for this Master in providing it. He explains:

One day I was sent out into the field to cut corn-stalks with one of my young masters. He looked at me and saw that I was sick. He, being a Christian, took me in hand and told me that I was a sinner, and all I had to do was believe that Jesus Christ was able to save. He told me about hell and its horrors. From morning to evening, he talked...

(14)

While these lines develop an important theme in his narrative, namely Christian conversion and preparation for full participation in the nation, it is necessary to look both at what Marrs says in this moment and what he leaves unsaid to avoid the mistake of assuming he is participating in reminiscing about the Old South. While Marr's life after the war, as a devout Christian and reverend, suggests the positive importance of this moment in his development, the conditions under which it occurred suggest something else to the astute reader. The statement is of a more radical nature than it appears on the surface. Marrs may in fact be grateful for the knowledge of Christ which his young master imparted; however, it is difficult to believe that he was glad to be forced to do field labor while he was sick. It is also difficult to imagine that Marrs found an all-day religious lecture a better response to his illness than rest and warm, healthful food. Unlike Douglass before him, Marrs does not chastise his former master, but this is a different historic moment and presumably Marr's goals are different. By couching his salvation story in these terms, Marrs attempts to argue for inclusion in the national narrative by later illuminating how he developed the tools he was given under slavery rather than emphasizing the trauma. It was the trauma of slavery that many used to declare African

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Americans as unfit for full participation in democracy; Marris turns this into something else while still leaving the condemnation of his master available to all “who have eyes to see and ears to hear.”

Consequently, his decision to enlist is narrated as not being out of hatred for his former master; instead, he asserts his individual will rather than waiting to be scooped up by one of either recruitment patrols. It is not so much the desire for heroism that propels him but a desire to take charge of his own destiny. As such, he writes “By twelve o’clock the owner of every man of us was in the city hunting his slaves, but we had all enlisted save one boy, who has considered too young” (Marris, 20). His enlistment marks the moment he moved beyond the reach of his former master. Once he is safely ensconced in his barrack, he realizes the road that he must take if he wishes to be free. I would argue that this articulation of motivation, while no doubt partially true, is also disingenuous. Given the statements and experience of thousands of contraband who crossing over the Union line fleeing slavery, it is clear that Marris would have been fully aware of the decision he was making. However, in 1885, it was not “martial manhood” that would garner the respect of his audience; instead, it is proof that as an African American man he has been fully prepared to participate in the American democratic experiment through the experience of self-fashioning he describes.

The first full day that Marris serves in the Union army, his thoughts turn immediately to his family and all that he has left behind. He pleads with God to protect and defend them while he struggles to find the courage to move forward. His response to being called to duty is telling and, consequently, worthy of quoting at some length. He writes:

Breakfast time came, the tattoo was beat, and the men formed into line. I was not disobedient to the call. The Orderly Sergeant called the roll, and when he called 'Marrs, Elijah' I promptly answered. I can stand this said I, and like a man, with cup, pan, and spoon, marched up to the window and received my rations. It is true I thought of my mother's sweet voice when she used to call me to dine, but 'pshaw!' said I, 'this is better than slavery, though I do march in line to the tap of a drum.' I felt freedom in my bones and when I saw the American eagle, with outspread wings, upon the American flag, with the motto '*E Pluribus Unum*' the thought came to me, 'Give me liberty or give me death.' Then all fear banished. I had quit thinking as a child and had commenced to think as a man.

(Marrs, 22)

The opportunity now to choose to march to the 'tap of the drum' is what makes it possible for Marrs to "stand this" and march "like a man, with cup, pan and spoon" (22). It is only when he realizes that he has chosen to respond to the voice of the tattoo that the experience of marching to the beat of a drum, a technique used by many masters on many plantations throughout the south, feels "better than slavery" (22). When he writes that he is willing to sacrifice his life for his liberty, it is the maintaining, not the securing, of that liberty for which he fights. He is also not fighting to gain a version of manhood; he already presumes it. He is fighting to defend it. Liberty is not an abstract virtue for Elijah Marrs; rather, by choosing enlistment over remaining on the plantation he has made a decision for himself, perhaps for the first time in his life, and the desire to continue to make his own decisions is, in his eyes, a worthy rationale. Although his use of revolutionary language makes it appear that he is engaged in the rhetoric of "heroic virtue", his rationale actually follows from the ideals of "ordinary virtue". While Marrs' story represents his own unique experience, the historic reality of his experience is by no means unprecedented.

Beginning with the very first outbreak of war, slaves in the South began exerting pressure on the Northern troops to be recognized. Eventually known as “contraband,” Southern slaves began leaving their masters in droves and making their way to Union lines hoping to find freedom. Often arriving with only scraps of clothing on their backs, Northern military officers were unsure of how to treat what were, in essence, runaway slaves. While some, like General Butler, allowed them to stay, others felt compelled to return runaway slaves to their owners arguing that the Fugitive Slave law still held sway in the rebelling states since, technically, succession was not constitutional. However, even Butler was unsure of their status. It is recorded that he asked Secretary Cameron: “What shall be done with them (contraband)? and, Second, what is their state and condition?” He also inquired of Lincoln what should be done with the contraband writing: “Are these men, women, and children, slaves? Are they free? Is their condition that of men, women, and children, or that of property, or is it a mixed relations?” (Spurgeon, 33) If Butler, who was more sympathetic to the contraband than most, was unsure of their status, other military leaders were more assured, although not in ways that were helpful to these men, women, and children.

For example, General George McClellan instructed his field commanders to “see that the rights and property of the people are respected, and repress all attempts at negro insurrection,” General Butler offered to support the South in putting down any insurrection. And, Ulysses S. Grant is known to have said, when ordering his troops to assist owners in finding their slaves; “I do not want to see the army used as negro catchers, but still less do I want to see it used as a cloak to cover their escape” (Williams, 71, 78). Those who disagreed with McClellan, Butler and Grant generally responded with

concerns about the tactical nightmare this created. Essentially, Northern troops were attempting to wage a war against an enemy while still expending energy to secure that enemy's property. The irony of this tactical approach was not lost on all; however, the true nature of the "contraband's" position remained rife with ironic dissonance.

Most of the arguments that were being forwarded by politicians and military leaders betrayed how the white community viewed the manhood and contributions of African American soldiers. Many whites were finally able to tolerate the enlistment of black soldiers on the assumption that they would: first, do the labor found to be untenable by white soldiers, and, second, they would act as a buffer between white soldiers and Confederate guns. An article in the *New York Times* argued "a thousand blacks will save a thousand white men from being drafted" (Casey, 133). These two arguments are a far cry from recognizing the courage and manhood of African American men; they are, in reality, arguments that are not that far removed from the rationale that supported slavery; namely, that blacks were capable of doing work that was too difficult or time consuming for whites, thus freeing up the superior race to do more important work. Even in wartime, racism was capable of transforming the originating myth of the citizen soldier into something else entirely when applied to African Americans. Their service, while necessary, was articulated in ways that could still deny blacks the full measure of recognized manhood translated into the rights of citizenship.

The development of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kansas Colored Regiment, the first African American unit to see combat, is an excellent example of this two-faced response to the service of African American soldiers. James Henry Lane, a Democrat, came to Kansas to make a name for himself as a Free State congressman. As a part of his work to gain support for

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the Free State Party, Lane tour the country giving speeches. He argued that Kansas needed to be preserved for hardworking white labors. In one speech, given in Chicago, Lane pointed to the territorial laws put forth by the Lecompton government which dictated death for any who secreted slaves away from their masters. It is recorded that he said:

According to the Kansas code... if a person kidnapped a white child, the utmost penalty was six months in jail – if he stole a nigger baby, the penalty was *Death*. Who worships niggers, and slave nigger babies at that? To kidnap a white child into slavery – six months in jail – kidnap a nigger into Freedom- *Death!*

(Spurgeon, 15)

Like many Free State supporters, Lane was not an abolitionist. He was not concerned with the mistreatment of African American men, women, and children. Rather, he was concerned about opportunities for Anglo-Americans. Opening up Kansas to slavery meant bringing in a cheap labor source that would compete for white jobs while further exasperating the class division that was already felt between the owners of the means of production and labors. It is difficult to imagine that this politician, one who engaged in such racist, populist language, would also be the first to lead colored troops into battle but that is, indeed, the case.

When the war broke out, Lane saw it as an opportunity to exact revenge on the Missouri slaveholders who had crossed the state line to turn Kansas into a battleground. Immediately, he began going into Missouri to punish those he deemed responsible for Bleeding Kansas and, very quickly, he realized that stealing material, including slaves, was an effective way to exact the most painful wounds. In doing so, he also realized that these same slaves were a powerful tool in continuing to strike out against Missourians. His tactics received a great deal of criticism, not the least of which came because

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Missouri was a border state that Lincoln was desperately trying to keep in the Union, but as the war continued critics began to see Lane's regiment as a potential source of strength to the Union army.

Lane wasted no words in expressing his rationale for arming African American ex-slaves and his pragmatic response to the war gained followers. The Kansas City's *Daily Journal of Commerce* ran an editorial in support of Lane which claimed that the newspaper now supported "employing everybody that will destroy bushwackers and those who favor them, even Negroes, Indians, and Jim Lane" (Spurgeon, 71). In a letter to his brother, Samuel Reader wrote "I cannot understand why negro volunteers are refused while whites are to be drafted" (Spurgeon, 71). White political and military leaders as well as popular opinion began to see the power in removing slaves from their masters, arming them and then engaging them in battle for the Union. This did not mean that these same individuals recognized the manhood of the contraband soldiers they wished to employ; often it was much the opposite. But gradually the need for men and material outstripped racist feelings toward colored soldiers.

While this reception made some African American unsure about how to proceed, the flow of self-emancipated slaves continued to accelerate. African American recognized that the enemy of their enemy was their friend and took steps to align themselves with those most likely to recognize the worth they knew they already had. While many, even most, arrived with nothing, some brought considerable military intelligence as well as Southern material. One notable individual, William Tillman, brought an entire schooner he had confiscated for the Union cause. Whatever they were able to carry away, however, they brought with them the knowledge that slavery had

denied them their rights, destroyed their families and attempted to impress upon them the acceptance of their own lesser status. To this they would not concede.

From the very outset of the war, Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists saw what many white politicians refused to acknowledge. Having found John Brown compelling, Douglass refused to actively support the endeavor, not from pacifist morality, but because he did not believe that Brown could effectively arm the slave population at large. The Civil War, however, had the potential to do what John Brown had failed to do: create a general slave rebellion throughout the South. With that understanding in mind, Douglass, and many like-minded African American abolitionists, began to pressure Lincoln to 1) emancipate the slaves thus officially recognizing the abolitionist roots of the war and 2) allow African American men the right to enlist in the Union army. Douglass worked with others in the African American community to create the political will to forward his emancipationist vision of the Civil War.

Douglass, like many radical abolitionists, had a complex relationship with the new president. On the one hand, once Lincoln had secured the presidency, Douglass saw an opportunity to unify support for abolition and worked hard to support the Republican president while applying pressure on him. However, prior to the election, Douglass was unimpressed with Lincoln's record regarding slavery and felt he was, at best, the lesser to two evils. The well-known abolitionist and author campaigned for the election of Garret Smith, a radical abolitionist, over Lincoln, claiming: "Let Abolitionists, regardless of the outside pressure, regardless of the smiles or the frowns, mindful only of the true and right, vote in the coming election for the only men now in the field who believe in the complete manhood of the negro" (McPherson, 9). Douglass recognized the inherent

strength of manhood and was committed to demanding that recognition from both the white abolitionist community and the governing body of the nation. Lincoln may have been sympathetic to abolition; however, Douglass very clearly perceived the fact that Lincoln did not recognize the manhood of the black man and, according to the structure of the culture at that time, could not, therefore, recognize the full humanity of the African American community. It came then as no surprise that pressure would have to be exerted on Lincoln to garner the political recognition of African Americans as men and full citizens in the United States. Douglass believed that this could be done through exceptional military service; the Civil War offered a proving ground for the manhood of African American men as well as demonstrating their loyalty and commitment to the nation<sup>52</sup>; but, this opportunity would come gradually and after much struggle.

While in the South African Americans fled across union lines in ever increasing numbers, in the North, African Americans worked together to create the political will that would allow blacks to serve. This is not to say that there were not those who argued that African American men should wait to enlist but even within that argument the main thrust was to force whites to recognize the inherent manhood of the African American man. For example, during one enlistment meeting, it was recorded that a Mr. Robert Johnson rose and claimed:

...it was not cowardice which made young men hesitate to enlist, but a proper respect for their manhood. If the government wanted their services, let it guarantee to them all the rights of citizens and soldiers, and, instead of one man, he would ensure them 5,000 men in twenty days.

(McPherson, 179)

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<sup>52</sup> Ironically, there was a need for blacks to demonstrate their loyalty to a nation that had oppressed them for years given that most would not believe they could be loyal having been treated so poorly.

The applause that greeted Johnson's remarks suggested that he had hit a raw nerve with the community. When both sides of a war routinely disparage your manhood and treat you as second-class citizens, it is difficult to swallow one's pride and defend the side that is, at least, willing to consider a general emancipation of your community. And while men like Frederick Douglass made powerful arguments in favor of enlistment, it could be a bitter pill to swallow. While Douglass's arguments, and those like his, eventually won out throughout the largest portion of the African American community, it should not be forgotten that African Americans were well aware of the insults they were strategically ignoring. They did so, as Douglass demonstrates, in an attempt to gain legal recognition of that which they already possessed.

Of all the African American leaders, Frederick Douglass was, perhaps, the one who argued most vehemently for African American involvement in the Civil War. And he did not just campaign for enlistment; his two sons enlisted as soon as they were able. Again and again, Frederick Douglass's language is an attempt to flip this insult into an opportunity and call to action. Emphasizing the link between citizenship and the defense of the nation, he wrote:

Our Presidents, Governors, Generals and Secretaries are calling, with almost frantic vehemence for men. – 'Men! Men! send us men! they scream, or the cause of the union is gone... Every man who can carry a bucket of water, or remove a brick is wanted; but those who have the care of the building, having a profound respect for the feeling of the national burglars who set the building on fire, are determined that the flames shall only be extinguished by Indo-Caucasian hands, and to have the building burnt rather than save it by means of any other. Such is the pride, the stupid prejudice and folly that rules the hour. – Why does the Government reject the negro? Is he not a man? Can he not wield a sword, fire a gun, march and countermarch, and obey orders like any other?... Men in earnest don't fight with one hand, when they might fight with two, and a man drowning

would not refuse to be saved even by a colored hand.

(McPherson, 164)

Douglass's plea to allow African American men to fight is built on a couple of important pillars. First and foremost, he builds upon the need that the Union had while fighting a prolonged battle against an entrenched enemy. This need became increasingly dire as the war progressed and African Americans, in both the North and the South, used this as an opportunity to push the twin issues of emancipation and enlistment as a pragmatic solution to the war effort. It is equally important to note that pragmatic solutions can be implemented without the underlying assumptions of individual decision makers being notably altered. One might agree to a course of action because it is the pragmatic choice enacted to serve a greater good and still disagree with the basic premises that underpin that solution. This, I would argue, was exactly what happened as white politicians and military leaders began to allow for the enlistment of black soldiers.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, Douglass links this need with the argument that African Americans were men who were equally capable in the field of battle and willing to fight for their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is a key trope throughout African American arguments for a general enlistment of black men; given the need of the Union, it made sense to allow all willing participants to enlist thus affording black soldiers the opportunity to prove their manhood and commitment to the Union cause. Manhood could, according to this

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<sup>53</sup> An exception example of this was during the final moments of the Civil War when the Confederacy began to allow African Americans the opportunity to serve in the Confederate army in exchange for freedom following the war.

particular articulation of it, be demonstrated through fighting, discipline, a facility with weapons, and the ability to understand and follow through with orders from a superior.<sup>54</sup>

Not an uncommon argument, the idea that by doing battle against Southern slaveholders and traitors to the nation, African American could prove their worthiness for citizenship was repeated again and again in newspaper editorials, broadsides, and speeches.<sup>55</sup> For example, Alfred M. Green, an African American schoolteacher in Philadelphia, argued, in a newspaper editorial:

The prejudiced white men North and South will never respect us until they are forced to do it by deeds of our own... The issue is here; let us prepare to meet it with manly spirit; let us say to the demagogues of the North who would prevent us even now from proving our manhood and foresight in the midst of these complicated difficulties; that we will be armed, we will be schooled in military service; and if our fathers were cheated and disfranchised after nobly defending the country, we their sons have the manhood to defend the right and sagacity to detest the wrong; time enough to secure to ourselves the primary interest we have in the great and moving cause of the great American rebellion.

(McPherson, 33)

Green develops the idea of learning, where necessary, and demonstrating the traits of manhood through soldiering with a corresponding belief that citizenship is earned by this service.<sup>56</sup> To be a man is to defend the nation from those who would destroy it; to be a man is to wrest one's rights from the hands of those who would deny them. Green also

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<sup>54</sup> This last ability – to follow orders – would come to plague the discourse surrounding military discipline as both slaves and soldiers were expected to follow and obey orders. By allowing slaves, who were also expected to unquestioningly follow the orders of superiors, to be soldiers, many felt that the position was diminished. In fact, some of the most common arguments against allowing the enlistment of African American soldiers was that it would insult the manhood of the white soldiers who were already fighting.

<sup>55</sup> Note here that African Americans are equating manhood and citizenship following the precedent laid out following the Revolutionary War; however, whites would quickly find ways around this linkage in the period following the Civil war thus prolonging the battle over full citizenship for African American men.

<sup>56</sup> The idea that military service trained a man for life outside of the military is one that was common across racial lines. It should, therefore, not be assumed that Green is arguing that African American men needed to learn how to be men. This language should be viewed as consistent with the trope that the military turns boys into men rather than seeing it as a meditation on the defects of African Americans.

hints at the idea that the cause of the union needed to be linked, politically, to the cause of emancipation and that it is through the use of African American soldiers that this work will be done. Many in the African American community, on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, saw the Civil War as being linked to a general slave uprising. They wanted to fight to free themselves and their communities. Green argues that by doing what whites had done in the Revolutionary War, African Americans could secure a position as full citizens within the Union.<sup>57</sup> This kind of argument is based on the belief that although rights might be divinely given, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, they are only available to those willing to fight to secure them. This fight had both an intellectual and a physical component: the need to prove that one can secure these rights and defend them while also demonstrating the ability to make use of those rights once secured. Only true men could do both.

In addition to calling for admittance to the Union army, African Americans worked within their communities to prepare themselves for the time that they would be called upon. This preparation was often met with negative reactions. One gathering of colored militias came to the notice of local whites who were disturbed to see black men gathered to practice drilling. “The proceedings coming to the ears of Municipal Authorities, judge the surprise of these patriotic individuals when waited upon by the Chief of Police, and informed by him that all that kind of thing must be stopped, that they had nothing to do with the fight. It was *white man’s fight, with which niggers had nothing to do*” (McPherson, 34-35). It is unclear exactly what propelled the white neighbors to become so alarmed at the sight of a black militia but it isn’t unreasonable to guess that they were, in part, upset that black men would assume the carriage of soldiers with all the trappings

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<sup>57</sup> Whites had conveniently forgotten the participation of African Americans in the Revolutionary War.

of martial manhood that accompany such displays. The description also implies that whites understood the connection between military service and citizenship.

The anger that this event aroused also suggests something about the position of black within the citizenship of the nation. Since the *Dred Scott* decision, African Americans had been legally declared non-citizens with “No rights which the white man was bound to respect” (*Dred Scott v. Sandford*). By organizing a militia for the defense of the Union, these men had assumed citizenship and, yet, they were not citizens. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson explains how certain groups, regardless of geographic location, remain outside of the conception of the nation-state. He writes “The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequences of loathsome copulations: outside history. Niggers are, thanks to the invisible tarbrush, forever niggers.... no matter what passports they carry or what language they speak and read” (Anderson, 149). To participate as soldiers of a nation meant to be counted as part of the nation; those most opposed to the enlistment of African American soldiers did so because it was clear soldiers could not be denied citizenship from the nation they defended. African American men enlisted because they saw themselves already as men, through unrecognized by the Union, who deserved the rights and powers of citizenship. Given that the war was one to preserve the Union, at least ostensibly, African Americans who stood outside of the concept of the nation could not participate. When white men saw black men acting as soldiers, it offended both their manhood and their sense of themselves as Americans. If African Americans could be soldiers, what did

that say about white men and their special position as citizens and defenders of the nation?

It was during this time, while debates regarding the enlistment of African American freemen and contraband was raging that J. Madison Bell, an African American poet and associate of John Brown, penned a poem entitled “What Shall We Do with the Contrabands?”<sup>58</sup> In it, he advocates arming contrabands and sending them back to “confront with his merciless lord,/ and purge from their race, in the eyes of the brave,/ the stigma and scorn now attending the slave” (McPherson, 165). Bell acknowledges that, in the past, white resistance to black enlistment came from the belief that these individuals lacked the courage necessary to serve as soldiers. Individuals who had, according to white interpretation, allowed themselves to be enslaved could not now be counted one rise to the occasion and strike for liberty. Additionally, in tandem with this idea, the poem dares to mention the desire that African American men had to vindicate themselves against those who had insulted them, harmed them and their families, and engaged in generations of abuse against the black community. While perfectly acceptable for white men to claim the privilege of both defense and retaliation, a black man who did so was charged with excessive aggression and steps were taken to put him back in his place. Consequently, Bell had to approach this idea in a manner so as not to enrage whites in the North who feared black retaliatory violence. Controlled military action rather than vigilante justice was the method used to insure the support of those who might fear black aggression. Finally, perhaps, a way of striking back at slavery that would also garner the

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<sup>58</sup> It is important to note that the discussion regarding enlisting contraband versus enlisting freedmen was complicated by the legal position of escaped slaves. The decision to enlist freedmen came before the decision to enlist contraband although in the field this distinction was rarely noted. In many ways, this was the original “don’t ask, don’t tell” military policy.

respect of Northerners had opened up. The idea that black men desired the opportunity to defend their honor was also recognized by Douglass who had penned a scathing public letter to his former master in an attempt to gain some form of retribution and public justice for the assault inflicted on both his person and his sense of his own manhood. And, like Douglass' Madison Washington, the African American community now freed from the having to fight against the legal apparatus of slavery supported by the entire nation, desired ways to engage in the battle. And like Madison Washington, they did so in acceptable ways that were defined by military rules of engagement.

Bell also used his poem to reinforce the power of African American manhood. In claiming that the war is "one for freedom" in addition to union, he argues that the "wronged and oppressed" should "lead the charge." By doing this, the "end is not far/ When the contraband host are enrolled in the war?" (McPherson, 165). By enlisting the help of the strong arms of African American men, the Union was given the opportunity to bring to a swift end the conflict that had gone on for far too long. Black men, then, became saviors to the Union elevating their status in ways unseen in the rhetoric of the time.

While poetry, leaflets, and newspaper editorials are available calling for the right to enlistment, few actual texts describing the experience of soldier told from the perspective of African American soldiers exists. This is part of what makes Elijah Marr's document so powerful. His description of why he chose to fight demonstrates the manner in which soldiering provided Marrs another opportunity to demonstrate his manhood within the community of men that made up the regiment. It was then hoped that this would transfer to the national stage. Interestingly, due to conditions under which the

memoir was written, Marrs avoids discussion of some of the most well know aspects of Civil War battles – namely, the fighting and the lack of sufficient supplies that only increased as the war trudged on.

Scholarship regarding war writing also suggests that certain realities about the types of traumatic experiences faced by soldiers remain unspeakable. In addition, descriptions of war often emphasize the experience of bodies in battle rather than individual subjects, thereby leaving very little space for descriptions of interiority.

Jennifer James, in her book on African American war writing, explains that the emphasis on embodiedness in much war writing made African Americans leery of engaging in the form. According to her research,

the problem of embodiment was central to the black abolitionist slave narrative. In order to emphasize the barbarous cruelties of slavery, the writers of these narratives were forced to present (although hesitantly, at times) tales populated with degraded bodies; bodies victimized by lynching, whipping, rapes, murders, and numerous other sadistic acts routinely implemented to beat the black body into the objectified state that would retroactively ‘confirm’ its proper status as commodifiable entity.

(11)

Since the work of abolition had emphasized the bodily horrors associated with slavery, to reference the bodily horrors of the war risked reinscribing these same black bodies in the language of pain. To do so opened up the possibility of evacuating descriptions of black men of their interiority and leaving a space for whites to deny them their rights as citizens. To see the black body in pain because of the injuries of war was too reminiscent of the black body tortured under the lash of slavery. The line between slavery and war was, in fact, too thin, and an accurate description of one highlighted the pain of the other.

David Roediger further develops this idea when he looks at the link between claims to citizenship and bodily wholeness. Arguing that the image of the disabled veteran was “an apt symbol of republican sacrifice but not necessarily of republican manhood,” Roediger emphasizes the need to appear physically and intellectual whole in order to qualify for the rights of citizenship. This need was doubly so for African Americans as many argued that the conditions created by generations of slavery made African American ineligible for the full rights of citizenship. They needed to be educated and tutored before they could effectively participate in democracy through franchise. Given that to be disabled was equated with being as good as black and that white Invalid Corp officers eventually were moved into positions of leadership within the Freedman’s Bureau, again linking blacks and disability, it is not unlikely that African American authors were loath to make the connection between bodily suffering and the black image.

African Americans might also have preferred to remain silent regarding their service in the war because the image of the armed black man was still a taboo during the Reconstruction period. John Casey aptly explained in *New Men: Reconstructing the Image of the Veteran in Late-Nineteenth Century American Literature and Culture* that ‘Black soldiers conjured up images of violence that seemed to support white claims that black males were primitives’ (131). And in her research on such works as *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon Jr., James argues that:

African American men in military uniform, the iconic symbol of black future simply came to signify two alternative regressive black masculinities: slaves who had followed their masters to war or illegitimate soldiers masquerading as the masters of whites during the military rule of Radical Reconstruction – characterized as the topsy-turvy nightmarish period of ‘nigger domination.’ The former image of the black man was meant to evoke nostalgia, the latter, terror; a terror that was destined to become

increasingly sexualized as the genre reached its end.

(James, 59)

The image of the black man, whether dressed in the legitimacy of a military uniform or not, was one that drew out fear in white audiences. It is this image combined with that of the African American sexual predator that eventually became the argument for groups like the K.K.K. The need to separate African Americans from that image while still maintaining the power attributed to national defense became preeminent.

It is under these conditions that Marr's lack of description of military exploits becomes intelligible. Although not completely devoid of descriptions of military life, Marrs is very careful about what he selects for inclusion. One moment that Marrs chooses to include is that of his very first night. Occupying the top bunk of a three tiered set of bunk beds, the man in the middle accidentally discharged his rifle into the body of the man on the lower bunk, killing him immediately. Terrified at the realization of how close he has come to death within hours of enlisting, Marrs spends a fitful first night caught in continual nightmare. However, as we have seen, Marrs does, in fact, answer the call to arms the following morning.

The choice to include this moment of courage rather than emphasizing the courage found in battle allows Marrs to show manly strength in a moment that is removed from the politics of the war. Marrs' courage is evident without having to conjure up the image of an African American carrying a weapon that he fixes at white soldiers. It also allows Marrs to demonstrate how far the African American community has come through the military training given during the war. The events of his first night would not likely be repeated by the honed military battalion he described later on in the text. It is

these same men who will eventually come to guard “twelve thousand prisoners of war” on their way to Louisville (37). His military training has more than prepared him for participation in democracy – an argument aimed at any who might feel uncertain regarding African American preparedness. It is clear that Marris has very carefully selected narrative moments that will demonstrate his manhood to a racist, largely uninterested audience.

The only other time that Marris participates in an extended discussion of the peril he faced serving in the Union army is when he describes being surrounded by rebel troops. While there is no mention of shots fired, Marris’ squad is surrounded by Confederate troops who demand their immediate surrender. General Williams, the commanding Union officer, was handed a paper that said, simply; “We demand an unconditional surrender” (49). Both Marris and a Sergeant Thomas quickly stated their refusal to concede to those demands as the threat of capture by Confederate forces meant death to all colored troops as well as their commanders. However, as the totality of their situation is fully revealed to them, it is clear that success against the Confederate troops is impossible.

They drew nearer and nearer, and we could see from the cupola of the church where we had taken refuge, that they outnumbered us twenty to one, and were still coming from the surrounding hills in great numbers. [break] At length the rebels procured a stack of hay, and placing it on a wagon on the hill-side, prepared to ignite it and run it down against the church for the purpose of burning us out. Sharpshooters had been placed so as to command every window, and our situation was indeed hazardous.

(49-50)

Surrounded and threatened by fire, the men determine to face down the dangers posed by the Confederate troops. Love then demonstrated his understanding of the added danger

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that colored troops faced when captured by the Confederacy by choosing to confer with his troops. This show of respect the Lieutenant offers them is especially meaningful because it is recognition both of the additional danger his troops face and demonstrative of his recognition of these soldiers as men who have the right to determine their own fate. When questioned by Love, Marris exclaims, “No surrender” as do his fellow men-in-arms demonstrating the desire to perish in battle rather than be killed in captivity. The Lieutenant, potentially out of compassion for his men, refuses to do that; he cannot see them killed in battle. And so he utilizes the respect he garners as a white man and officer to secure his troops safe passage back to their regiment. He writes a note back to the Confederates which outlines his counterclaim: “We will surrender our men to you on the following terms: That you immediately parole us and give us a safeguard to our regiment, and that we turn over to you all of our munitions of war” (50). This particular moment is interesting because it is the transference of the rights of manhood through the strength of the recognition of white manhood. Much as reconciliation after the war occurred through the recognition of common manhood between whites, Marris’ squad is granted the status of men through the petitioning of his white superior officer. It is also of note that the Confederacy took all munitions from the African American troops, or their property, but forfeited their claim on the “contraband” as Southern property.

In some ways, this mimics what African American soldiers hoped they would gain through their service to the Union army. By participating in the battle to end slavery, African American men hoped to prove their manhood, not to themselves, but to those whites who were most likely to listen and be open to the message of a bi-racial community of men and citizens. This would then, it was hoped, transfer to back to the

men in the South after the war was won through legal and political means, thus granting African American men full citizenship throughout the United States. As we have seen, the bounds of white manhood proved to be stronger than the respect individual African Americans garnered through military service, leaving this dream unfulfilled.

It is also worthy of note that the one time in the narrative that Elijah Marris details shooting at a white man, it occurs, not during the war, but afterwards as Marris defends his friends from an attack by the K.K.K. In his wartime recollections, Marris only mentions having shot a Confederate soldier as an aside without detailing how the death occurred. Here, however, he gives a bit more description:

While in Lagrange, sitting at the fireside of Elder W. Lewis one beautiful fall night, we heard the windows of the house broken in and a general uproar. The K.K.K. was upon us. I told the women to get behind the chimney for safety. The irons were hot upon the stove, and I used them freely in rebelling the assault. Mr. Roberts ran to his bed for a pistol, but was struck on the head with a stone and fell back. Mrs. R. attempted to reach it, when she, too, was forced to retire. Mr. Roberts, St., finally made his way to the bed and secured the weapon, and would have made short work of our assailants had the pistol been loaded. The K.K.K. did not know this, however, and when they saw it they fled. I followed them up to where I boarded, and securing my old gun I returned to Mr. Lewis'. About midnight they came again, and as they got near me I called to them to halt and then fired. They immediately fled, never to return.

(87)

Although Marris describes firing upon the K.K.K., he does so in a manner of almost anonymity. We do not know the size of the forces that gathered against this small community of friends, nor are the details of the events leading up to the attack ever given. We are not told who was involved in the attack even though, by following them to their place of boarding, Marris would have gained enough information to make their open secret known. In keeping back these details; Marris creates an almost apolitical moment.

We recognize the politics of the event because we are aware of Marrs' station and we know the ideology that propelled the K.K.K. to action. Nonetheless, while these details are there, they are not the ones that Marrs chooses to highlight.

What this moment does, however, is highlights Marrs' bravery while also linking the experience to the language of respectable manhood. We see a group of people comfortably seated around the fire when, without warning, they are attacked in their home. The men defend the women while exerting only the force necessary for their protection. If we were unaware of Marrs' history, and with it, his ethnicity, it could be assumed that this is a scene out of a romance novel showcasing brave gentlemen and unruly brigands. Building from his wartime experience, Marrs uses this scene to transform "martial manhood" into "respectable manhood" thereby hoping to demonstrate his ability to behave as a gentleman and an upstanding citizen.

In addition to spending little to no time describing the Civil War battles, Elijah Marr's narrative also avoids any discussion of either poor working conditions or loss of wages. While the working conditions for all soldiers were terrible, those of colored troops were especially poor, in part, because of the belief that they were immune to malaria. Consequently, they were often assigned to the task of cleaning out the heavy marshlands that dotted the South for both the building of barricades and the development of army camps.<sup>59</sup> Marrs mentions being ill for a considerable period of time and, given the statistics regarding illness during the Civil War, it is likely that he suffered from either malaria or dysentery – two illnesses linked to environmental factors. However, other than

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<sup>59</sup> For more on illness among African American troops during the Civil War, see Downs, Jim. *Sick From Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering During the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

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using the experience as an example of his fortitude and strength, Marrs is silent on the matter.

Additionally, he does not mention his salary at any point in his narrative. Even after securing the opportunity to fight in the Union army, African American soldiers continued to be insulted by receiving less pay for the same work as white soldiers. While white soldiers received thirteen dollars a month and had their uniforms provided, African Americans received only ten dollars a month of which three was earmarked to pay for uniforms. John Casey points out that “either amount was probably more than most of these men had earned before the war” (138), a reality that suggests that the anger this difference in pay created had less to do with money and more to do with the insult to black manhood. Evidence from the soldier’s statements and the few extant writings available support this reading. A soldier from the 55<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts responded to the company’s decision not to take money from the state to make up the difference in federal pay. He argues;

A great deal has been said of the ungratefulness of the 55<sup>th</sup>. We would like to know if we must sacrifice our principle and manhood to keep our name from being slandered... We did not come to fight for money, for if we did, we might just as well have accepted the money that was offered us... It is not the money of 1863 that we are looking at! It is the principle; the one that made us men when we enlisted.

(McPherson, 202)

Another soldier argued;

We ask for equal pay and bounty, not because we set a greater value upon money than we do upon human liberty, compared with which, money is mere trash; but we contend for equal pay and bounty upon the principle, that if we receive equal pay and bounty when we go into the war, we hope to receive equal rights and privileges when we come out of the war.

(McPherson, 205)

Both of these statements are indicative of the feeling black soldiers had regarding their experience in uniform and their hopes for the future. Having enlisted in the Union army, African Americans believed that they had won a significant battle for recognition as men and citizens of the United States. They also believed that valiant service in the Union army would secure a place for them in the Union once the war had reached its completion, slavery had been outlawed, and the Confederacy subdued. Using African American troops to defeat the Confederacy suggested, in the minds of these men, defeating the racism and hatred that had upheld slavery for generations while opening new opportunities where African American men would be seen as equal to white men. By proving their manhood in battle, the ultimate test of masculinity, white men could no longer ignore black men's strength, courage or their fitness for citizenship.

To receive less pay for the same military work rightly suggested to African Americans that their service was not viewed in the same manner as the service of white men. To be denied the same benefits of their fellow men-in-arms during the war pointed to the reality that African Americans could, very well, be denied the rights of equal citizenship after the war. Consequently, African American soldiers chose to refuse payment for their services until they received equal pay; a change that was finally made in May of 1864. The change was retroactive creating a situation in which many African Americans received a lump sum that was much larger than they had ever had before. With this lump sum and the knowledge that they had won the battle against injustice in the Union army, African American soldiers entered life after the war with a great deal of optimism. Many, however, quickly found that this optimism would not prove realistic

and the emancipationist vision very quickly was taken over by the desire of white men, on either side of the conflict, to reconcile with their lost brothers.

Marrs chooses not to comment on any of these war-time realities, instead focusing on moments of individual courage and victory. African Americans recognized that the treatment they had received by the Union army was an insult to them as men. Therefore, rather than revisit these humiliations, Marrs chooses to reflect on his personal courage and discuss the moments where he was shown respect by his fellow men-at-arms. Using his discussion of the war to show how he was well-placed to participate in representative democracy, he then begins detailing many of his experiences in politics and the ministry after the war.

As Marrs goes on to suggest the benefits of his military service to his life after the war, he emphasizes those moments where he demonstrates “respectable manhood.” The failure of Reconstruction meant that soldiering was insufficient to demonstrating manhood to a world unwilling to listen to claims about African American humanity; however, recognition of one’s own full manhood went a long way to helping African Americans continue the fight for full recognition. It is important to note that this self-recognition came, not from the actual experience of physical battle, but, rather, through taking control of one’s own agency through an act of defiance to the master’s will; an event that, in this case, is demonstrated through enlistment but could have been gained by running away, offering aide to Union troops, or participating in one of the general work stoppages that occurred throughout the south during the war. In this way, Marrs’ decision mimics that made by Frederick Douglass in his famous battle with the slave breaker Covey. It is not an issue of physical might, but rather, an expression of the inward refusal

to submit to the will of another. What matters is not the physicality of the battle but rather the conscious choice to defend one's own beliefs.

After the war, Marrs served in both political positions in his community as well as finally settling into the ministry. Throughout his experience after the war, he stands up to the K.K.K, stares down political opponents and shows courage through risks taken in both business and the ministry. In his memoirs, his experiences after the war receive as much attention as battles during the war.<sup>60</sup> One experience is especially interesting because of the great pride that is evident in Marrs' telling of it as well as the way it mimics what few descriptions of battle he leaves us. Having learned to stand up for himself and stare down the enemy unflinchingly, a skill he demonstrates having learned by his discussions of courage in the face of fear, Marrs' draws upon his sense of manhood to do political combat with a white community leader. At one point in his career he was asked to give a speech in front of an assembly of both white and black men. In the crowd there was a man who had, three years earlier and prior to the ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, forcibly ejected Marrs from a temperance lecture because of the color of his skin, causing the former soldier to reach out to the lecturer, a Col. M. Taylor, to complain. The Col. told Marrs to "do nothing now, but the time would come when I would be a man" (117) referencing what must be the legal rights of citizenship. Although Marr is a man in his own eyes and the eyes of his former comrades in arms, he cannot call upon the respect that station should grant him as it is not legally mandated. When Marrs sees the man at his own lecture, he modifies his speech to "allude to him (the man who had given offense)" (117). One sees in this moment a scene not

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<sup>60</sup> Tellingly the name of his memoir was "The Life and History of the Rev. Elijah R. Marrs, First Pastor of Beargrass Baptist Church, and Author." Note that any reference to his military service is missing.

unlike that painted by Edith Wharton in her short story “Roman Fever;” two individuals doing metaphysical battle like gladiators in the Colosseum. Marris, in full view of the community, defies his offender’s estimation of him, much as he had when he made the decision to enlist in the Union army, and in doing so gains the esteem of the man who had belittled him. Instead of rising up in anger, the man “ever after treated me as a gentleman” (117). This time, not through physical battle, but intellectual prowess and courage, Marris gains recognition as a man and full member of the community. “Martial manhood” has not won over the Southern community; Marris hopes that “respectable manhood” will.

Marris has set up the war as only one step in his journey towards a better life, a journey which includes both slavery and his experiences after the war. This allows him to utilize narrative forces that might otherwise be used against him – his subservience to a master, his anger towards those who would enslave him, his willingness to fight against the Confederacy – as stepping stones to recognition as a full and productive man by the legal and political establishment of the day; in other words, an entity worthy of full citizenship.

Much has been written about the way in which the meaning of the Civil War changed over time. Given the disconnect between African American understandings of colored soldiering and those of Anglo-Americans, the experience of colored troops had to be re-imagined for a white audience after the war. As many did not look at the service and courage of African American soldiers as earning full citizenship in the nation, this meant that the way that African American memorialized the war had to take into account those experiences which demonstrated black fitness for the responsibilities of citizenship. It

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also meant that African Americans felt the need to emphasize the positive growth that was gained during the war rather than discussing those moments where their manhood was denied by both the military and the public at large. In doing so, African Americans hoped gain general recognition for that which they had already earned.

**Chapter IV:  
The Stallion and the Black Cat:  
Performing Manhood in the South after the Fall of the Confederacy**

*“You can only defend yourself as the person you are attacked as. A person attacked as a Jew cannot defend himself as an Englishman or Frenchman” – Hannah Arendt*

“He’s a nigger, and with me a nigger is a nigger, and nothing in the world can make him anything but a nigger” – statement reported to Charles Chesnutt by an African American acquaintance

**Cultural Context and Issues of Concern**

Historians have produced considerable scholarship tracing the ways that groups like the K.K.K. used African American participation in the Civil War as rationale for keeping their eyes on returned soldiers and their families. Scholars as prolific and varied as Steven Hahn, Eric Foner, and Drew Gilpin Faust have all done work on the ways in which African American soldiering appeared to many Southerners to be the beginning of a “race war” that would rend the social fabric of the South. The idea that ex-slaves who had been kept in passive acquiescence during slavery were awakened to a sense of their own power was alarming to those invested in maintaining the status quo. Additionally, the fear that this new awareness would awaken the potentially violent nature of African American men did much to heighten the fears of the white community. Having been viewed as less than human because of their supposed passive acquiescence to slavery, ex-slaves were now seen as needing to be ‘put in their place’ because of their service as Union soldiers. One of the things that this persistent reimagining of the boundaries of masculinity on the part of racism proves is the circular nature of racism’s rhetorical structure. To submit to slavery was proof of the fact that Africans were naturally suited to servitude; to resist was proof that those of African descent were blood-thirsty animals in need of being subdued. In the process, what it meant to be seen as a man fluctuated to

make space for a variety of white subject positions while excluding all efforts on the part of the African American community. Consequently, this research begins with the premise that, during the antebellum and reconstruction periods, white southern masculinity was dependant upon the negation of black manhood. The impact of this is substantial, for it suggests that African American males, as they attempted to work their way out of the rhetorical double bind of passivity and savagery, were able to gain an understanding of Southern ideas of manhood that were unavailable to those on the other side of the race divide. It may be that much like the slave in Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic, African American males, in their fight to be seen as men, gained a perspective on the socially constructed relationship between violence and manhood that surpassed that of their white contemporaries.

The works of scholars as varied as Orlando Patterson, David R. Roediger and Bertram Wyatt-Brown also support these conclusions. White men of the genteel classes saw the ownership of black male bodies indicative of their successful realization of the American Dream, while working class men defined their manhood in contrast to the lack of control they saw in the lives of black slaves. While the yeoman farmer may not have owned all that the upper class did, including land or the means of production, they did, at least, own their own bodies. Through the logic of racism, both wealthy and working class white men in the South developed an understanding of who they were as men as a counter to the position of black men. This then required that the position of black men remain static in order to allow white men to maintain not just economic and political control but a psychological status quo.

Bertram Wyatt-Brown's work on the development of community in the South and the importance placed on honor helps to illuminate some of the very real radical social reordering that was necessary to support the successful implementation of the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Amendments. In his landmark work, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, Wyatt-Brown stresses the performative nature of masculinity in an honor-bound society and the importance of maintaining 'face' in the community. His work also describes some of the ways in which Southern visions of masculinity and honor converged in the political, legal and economic structures of the South. Contrary to what might be assumed by modern readers, issues of honor were not private but, rather, by their very definition, matters of public approval. Not only honor but issues of law and order were determined in the court of public opinion whether that court was the located in City Hall or in the street. Ideas of both honor and law became intertwined in this type of social structure. Wyatt-Brown writes "Local opinion, not individualism in either a modern or a 'pioneer' sense, was the dominant force in Southern political life" (364). This meant that how laws were enforced varied according to community consensus. Additionally, this created a situation in which one's position in the community became something of a commodity that could be traded on and, consequently, a 'pearl of great price.'

Relationships between individual members of the community were linked by a desire for honor and a fear of shame. As honor was also linked to a sense of masculine strength, these cultural norms were often maintained by violence. Wyatt-Brown aptly explains the conjunction of honor, masculinity, and violence:

The use of physical force flourished at all levels of society. As always,

though, the lower ranks, burdened with economic and social anxieties that the rich escaped, committed the greater share of violent offences. A reason more fundamental than some vague 'frontier spirit' or an American penchant for violence was the social necessity of men of all ranks to preserve white manhood and person status in the fraternity of the male tribe to which it belonged. Through violence a degree of proximate stability was created, the balance wheel of race, order, and rank was maintained, and the values of what Victor Turner has called *communitas* were upheld. By the latter term is meant the idealized social whole to which individual loyalty was pledged and from which ethical consensus could be drawn. Some have preferred to call this social phenomenon a 'fantasy,' 'myth,' or 'romance,' an artifact of imagination in which the illusory views of life prevailed over actualities. These labels are useful chiefly as reference points to modern, or at least contrary moralities and concepts of acceptable behavior. But for those who lived within the boundaries of Southern white *communitas* there was no alternative social plan about which even to dream. With some exceptions, white Southerners were not given to conjuring up utopias; they resigned themselves to what was and assumed that it approached what ought to be.

(368-9)

In this selection Wyatt-Brown describes a variety of issues surrounding Southern honor that will have an impact of the literature of the post-Reconstruction period and its commentary on the failure of Radical Reconstruction. First and foremost, the performance of manhood was also tightly bound to the economic position one held in the community. This meant that the strategy used to defend manhood would often be determined by the social position held by the defender. However, this also meant that men of other social positions were honor bound to allow a defense of manhood based on the means available to the individual. Upper class white men were expected to turn a blind eye to certain acts of violence, even ones that affected their bottom line, as payment for the kind of hierarchical structure that developed under slavery and made possible the rich plantation lifestyle. This is seen clearly in many of the works of the post-Reconstruction period; while poor, uneducated working class men led the lynch mobs, they were supported in their errand by upper class men who recognized that the actions of

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the mob were the ways in which these individuals maintained their honor in the community. Secondly, the idea that the *communitas* was seen not as an ideal utopian community but, rather, an acceptance of how things operated suggests that reform would be, and was, slow going at best. It highlights the radical nature of reforms, even failed ones.

The code of honor created to maintain community relationships also defined the ways in which black and white men could interact. In each community, even before the Civil War, a certain standard of behavior towards black men was required; this acted as a nominal protection against the egregious abuse of slaves. Slave masters who were particularly harsh lost standing in the community and there were even some cases, recorded by George P. Rawick, of slaves banding together to rid themselves of a particularly sadistic slave driver while the master turned a blind eye. At the same time, certain symbols and signs of respect from black men were demanded by their white superiors as recognition of the racial hierarchy in play within the community. Frederick Douglass notes this in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* through his recounting of how slaves learned to lie and many of the post-reconstruction criticisms of Jim Crow laws described what happened when black men got too ‘sassy.’” Add to this that much of the protection afforded to slaves due to their status as property was lost after the war and it is easy to see how the honor culture of the South could create a maelstrom of violence lodged at African American men.

During the period known as Reconstruction, the battle to maintain the rights granted to freemen in the Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth Amendments was, in part, a fight to imagine a different kind of relationship between black and white men. It should

then come as no surprise that white men who had built an understanding of their personhood on the claim that there was a real, quantitative difference between themselves and their slaves responded to these changes with anger. Thus, an understanding of the violence of the Reconstruction period must be understood not only as responding to social and economic pressures but also as a response to the pressure on white Southern men to reformulate a vision of their very personhood. Reimagining Southern society with a place for the freeman required not only putting in place economic and legal safeguards but formulating a kind of manhood that could make space for black men in the public sphere.

The emphasis placed, specifically during the period of slavery, on describing, categorizing and controlling black bodies placed African Americans outside of the discourse surrounding the public sphere and the realm of politics even after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. In attempting to rationalize the need for control over bodies of black men, slave owners had developed a rhetorical tradition that emphasized the ways in which blacks were thralls to the passions of their bodies and, consequently, required the paternal guidance of those who were guided by right reason. As white men defined masculinity in ways that demonstrated their respect of rational principles even in the use of violence, black men were viewed as antithetical to that: either children to be protected from themselves or animals to be controlled for the good of society. In his work on Frederick Douglass as a “postwar founder” of a new nation, Edward Tang points to the ways in which the Early Republic’s discourse surrounding citizenship and voting rights was linked to concerns about the *passions* of the general public overpowering reason and rationalism. Black bodies were seen as representative of that passion and,

after the war, were feared as an unfettered emotional outpouring that had the potential to undo the hard work that white men had done during and in the years following the Revolution. The decision to allow black men to participate in democracy fully was seen by many in the South as an attempt to overturn rational discourse and, in its place, turn the governing of the people over to individuals ruled by physical want and passion. At best, it was seen as turning governance over to a nursery school; at worst it was unleashing animal forces. There were, of course, activists, both white and black, who worked tirelessly to replace this rhetoric with one more sympathetic to the rights of the freemen. For example, in the texts of both Tourgée and Chesnut there are various attempts to turn this idea on its head by suggesting that it was actually Southern hatred that was a threat to American rationalism and, consequently, democracy. Additionally, these works demonstrated that African American men were not only capable of right reason but that they were potentially superior in that respect than the men who were attempting to bar them from entrance into the body politic.

Looking at the literature of this period, it is important to understand that this rhetorical attempt to redefine the relationship between black and white men was an important piece in the battle to preserve black franchise. It was not merely a cultural intervention, for it had very particular political and economic goals. Both of the authors discussed in this chapter viewed the cultural work of reexamining the relationship between black and white men as integral to achieving the goals of Radical Reconstruction. And, so, it is from this perspective that this chapter undertakes a reading of two key works from the period following the collapse of that dream.

### **A Textual Response**

In the work of two important post-Reconstruction authors, Albion Tourgée and Charles Chesnutt, there was an attempt not only to defend black masculinity, but to imagine a new white masculinity based on the basic principles of honor that underpinned the Southern genteel class. Tourgée and Chesnutt both modified understandings of honor to make a space for white acceptance of black manhood; however, the ability to simply imagine this new kind of relationship was insufficient. Both in reality, and in the texts that I will be discussing, a new version of white manhood was inadequate in the face of social and economic pressure towards the conservation of the old dialectical relationship. Nonetheless, envisioning a possible new relationship between former slave master and slave was an important first step in creating a base from which a community, forced by circumstance to co-exist, might eventually flourish.

While both authors look at the failure of traditional Southern masculinity to open a space for black men, they do so from very different perspectives. Tourgée suggests that the failure came from the racism of those who refused to recognize the possibility of this new fraternity. He also develops a language rooted in that of honorable defeat that he believes will allow Southerners to eventually come to recognize the equality of black manhood and welcome the freedmen into the public sphere. Chesnutt suggests something a bit more subtle. Chesnutt agrees that outright hatred of blacks played a part in this failure but he is also critical of the well meaning paternalism of white reformers. His ability to point to this blind spot comes, perhaps, from the fact that his own racial position

was so complex.<sup>61</sup> He convincingly argues that part of the failure of Reconstruction comes from the unwillingness, or perhaps inability, of white liberals, often enmeshed in the language of Northern capitalism, to examine the emasculating effects of their own racism on the position of black men. He also suggest something more than the importation of Northern capitalism, with its emphasis on efficiency and the bottom line, has the potential to deindividualize the men who it is supposedly meant to help.

Albion Tourgée, a white Northern lawyer and employee of the Freedman's Bureau, was known for establishing Bennett College, pleading the case of Homer Plessey, and coining the term "color-blind justice."<sup>62</sup> He also authored the novel *Bricks Without Straw* which tells the story of Reconstruction from the perspective of the freed people. Although he occupied a position of privilege, he was a knowledgeable and sympathetic outsider. As if to provide a parallel to Tourgée's work, Charles Chesnut, the son of free persons of color, pens *The Colonel's Dream*, the story of a white Southerner turned Northern businessman who returns to the South to aide in its economic uplift. Chesnut was known primarily for his stories of local color collected as *The Conjure Woman, and Other Tales of Conjure* as well as his longer works including *The Marrow of Tradition* and *The House Behind the Cedars*. Recently, though, scholars have become interested in his novel *The Colonel's Dream* which is particularly important as it is the only novel that Chesnut writes from the perspective of a genteel, Southern, white man.

In these novels, a pattern emerges. In each work of imaginative reform, the masculinity displayed by the genteel white patriarch is shown to be both built upon a lie

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<sup>61</sup> While Charles Chesnut adamantly claimed his African-American heritage, his visage was more Anglo-American in appearance.

<sup>62</sup> For greater discussion on this see, Mark Elliott's *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson*.

and no longer effective in the new Reconstruction South. Accordingly, both authors attempt to imagine a masculinity that might take its place; one based on respect for, at the very least, the black community and, potentially, a recognition of the black man as fully masculine and, therefore, fully capable of participation in the public sphere. However, in each of these novels, the attempt for white men to see black men as fully human is an abject failure and this precipitates the failure of Radical Reconstruction. While the white men flee, it is white women who are left to attempt to protect and defend the oppressed race. There appears to be something about normative white womanhood, linked as it was to sentimentality rather than rationality, that allowed women to do work deemed impossible for men. As always already outside of the public sphere because of their gender, women could console and comfort the black community while they attempted to influence the actions of white men. Although this was a situation rife with difficulties and various layers of systemic injustice, it offered a kind of maneuverability denied the white, middle class man. Taken together, these novels help illuminate the work that both black and white authors were doing to imagine a new relationship between former slave and former slave master as well as the limitations of even the best of these relationships. They also outline the various obstacles (social, emotional, economic, and political) that stood in the way of bringing these kinds of new relationships to fruition while illuminating the limitations of this kind of rhetorical work.

While both authors write in multiple novels about the passing away of the planter class and the fading of genteel masculinity, *Bricks Without Straw* does this explicitly through the character of Colonel P. Desmit. Desmit was once a vital, wealthy plantation owner who gave a name to every slave that he owned; however, at the end of the war he

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is portrayed as a broken man desperately attempting to hold onto a portion of his fortune. An important episode in the early pages of the novel develops the theme that this kind of Southern masculinity has been conquered by Northern troops. When, at the end of the war, Colonel Desmit goes out to reclaim what might be left of his fortune from the hands of Sherman and his soldiers, it is made clear that he possesses a certain kind of masculinity that will no longer serve as a protection to him nor make him vital in the newly imagined South. Tourgée writes:

Potestatem Desmit had his carriage geared up, and went coolly forth to meet the invaders. He had heard much of their savage ferocity, and was by no means ignorant of the danger which he ran in thus going voluntarily into their clutches. Nevertheless he did not falter. He had great reliance in his personal presence. So he dressed with care, and arrayed in clean linen and a suit of finest broadcloth, then exceedingly rare in the Confederacy, and with his snowy hair and beard, his high hat, his hands crossed over a gold headed cane, and gold-mounted glasses upon his nose, he set out upon his mission. The night before he had prudently removed from the place every drop of spirits except for a small demijohn of old peach-brandy, which he put under the seat of his carriage, intending therewith to regale the highest official whom he should succeed in approaching, even though it should be the dreaded Sherman himself.

(Tourgée, 145)

In this passage, told from the perspective of a genteel lord of the planter class, Desmit erroneously believes that his cavalier masculinity will be able to protect his goods from the Northern army. He is under the delusion that all can be settled with a discussion over a “old peach-brandy” and a handshake as his honor will be respected by those in authority over the Northern troops. There is a performative nature to this display; he believes that if he is just able to come across as a man of means and refinement, he will be treated with respect and deference. He also expects his position as one of the leading men in the community to lend power to his claims. He does not understand that the Civil War has

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upset the old order to such an extent to make all attempts of this kind impossible. The Civil War represents, in the time right after the war and through Radical Reconstruction, a radical reordering of society and social norms. Rather than being treated as a respectable older gentleman of means, he is maligned, heckled, robbed and treated as a rather pathetic enemy who does not fully comprehend that the end is at the door.

Importantly, it is done by Irish and German soldiers - immigrants that represent a threat to the Northern social structure. This response not only costs Desmit his property, which is summarily burned, but it is an attack on his honor and position in the community as a gentleman.

To make matters worse, after the war is over, Desmit learns that he no longer commands the same respect within his own community that he once did. Only three pages after the event during Sherman's March is described, though chronologically much later, the beaten Desmit finds that he no longer has any power over the "cattle" he once owned (Tourgée, 153). When Nimbus, a free black and former Union soldier who represents one of the masculinities available to African Americans in the post war period, goes to meet with his former master in order to broker a deal for the land that will form the basis of the African American community known as Red Wing, Desmit mistakes the freeman's purpose and begins an argument with Nimbus that leads to a court appearance before the Freedman's Bureau. This is the ultimate insult to Desmit's vision on himself as a man. Tourgée explains it thusly;

That this should be exasperating and degrading to the Southern white man was most natural and reasonable. The very corner-stone of Southern legislation and jurisprudence for more than a hundred years was based upon this idea: that the negro can have no rights, and can testify as to no rights or wrongs, as against a white man. [Break] To be summoned before the officer of the Bureau

confronted with a negro who denied his most solemn averments, and was protected in doing so by the officer who, perhaps, showed the bias of believing the negro instead of the gentleman was unquestionably, to the Southerner, the most degrading ordeal he could by any possibility be called upon to pass through.

(Tourgée, 159)

It is no exaggeration to say that Desmit, and by association that class of men that he stands for, understood the Freedman's Bureau as placing the rights and concerns of "cattle" over and above that of honorable men. Thus, while the court decisions of the Freedman's Bureau were forced upon the South, they were deemed as illegitimate. But importantly, they were illegitimate not because Southerners disagreed with their rulings but because the premise on which they were built was an affront to the honor of the governing classes. This episode points to the crux of what is at issue for the old Southern elite. In order to accept the possibility that a black man had the same rights, responsibilities and possibilities for honor as a white man required a radical reimagining of what it meant to be a man with rights. In addition to providing a legal platform for the protection of the rights of African Americans, the cultural work of accepting black masculinity also had to occur. Until that happened, the white man would always reject the argument for, let alone the possibility of "colorblind justice," thus hampering the work of any system put in place.

Chesnutt also suggests that a certain kind of prewar masculinity will no longer be effective in the world of the Reconstruction South. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, a ex-slave by the name of Sandy is accused of a murder that he did not commit. His former master, Old Mr. Delamere, believes that Sandy is innocent of the charges and, in a moment of genteel paternalism, attempts to save Sandy through the use of his good name. He argues that Sandy, having been raised in the Delamere's home, has been taught

properly and that to make such an accusation is to do dishonor to the family name. However, this paternalist relationship cannot save Sandy; Mr. Delamere's honor is not enough to counter the mounting evidence against his former slave. It is determined that, in order to save Sandy, the real criminal must be caught; this search leads the patriarch to learn that it is his own grandson, Tom Delamere, has committed the crime. Horrified, Old Mr. Delamere decides that he must protect Tom from public prosecution in order to save the family name. As the investigation continues, Old Mr. Delamere learns that he can save Sandy, without incriminating his grandson, by simply acting as Sandy's alibi. Thus, Delamere disowns Tom and commits perjury, saving both Sandy and his family honor. In this moment, Delamere both recognizes and responds to the reality of honor as a public or performative experience. The kind of honor so important to Southern masculinity could not be understood outside of the spotlight of public approval. What is shown in this series of events is that the old genteel masculinity based on a code of family honor is both insufficient in the new South and, more importantly, had always been built on a legacy of lies. Delamere the Older recognizes this and is humiliated by this new knowledge; it is as if the world he knew has crumbled around him as what he thought was honorable is shown to be a fiction.

The changes in social structure after the war did not merely cause moments of individual reflection. In instances where the concept of white supremacy was challenged, it drew forth a great deal of both anger and fear. Importantly, psychologists argue that anger is a secondary emotion; it covers for feelings of fear. And in instances where groups of white men lashed out at the African American community, the fear that prompted the rage was that of losing position or social standing. In *Bricks Without Straw*,

Tourgee demonstrates just what happens when the larger white male community feels their masculinity is under attack from black manhood. This supposed attack is linked to both fear of destruction of person and property as well as voting rights. In the eyes of very many Southerners these were the same thing. When election time comes, the men at Red Wing, an African American community under the leadership of Nimbus, feel inspired to assert their manhood by participating at a polling place in their own community. Tourgèe writes “The idea was flattering to their importance, a recognition of their manhood and political coordination which was naturally and peculiarly gratifying” (182). However, when it is determined that the polling place will be located in the center of the white community, the men of Red Wing become angry and are desirous to get it returned to Red Wing. Mollie Ainslie, the white Northern school teacher, convinces them to do otherwise suggesting that it will bring harm to the community. Nimbus and the other men of the community, therefore, decide to go in mass to the polling place with flags waving and music playing. By thus turning the election into a spectacle of black masculinity, they feel they can regain some of what is lost by moving the physical location of the election.

Upon hearing of the proposed parade, the white men in the community began to get nervous. Tourgèe writes “The white people in the country around about began to talk about ‘the niggers arming and drilling,’ saying that they intended to ‘seize the polls on election day,’ ‘rise up and murder the whites;’ ‘burn all the houses along the river’; and a thousand other absurd and incredible things which seemed to fill the air, to grow and multiply like baleful spores, without apparent cause” (183). Note here the way in which this list of concerns links voting rights with destruction and murder. As voting had been

seen as the one of the ultimate expressions of manhood in the Early Republic, the turning it over to black men was seen as the destruction of both democracy and the concept of self-governance<sup>63</sup>. This language, in turn, confirms to the men of Red Wing that the white men are preparing “to give color and excuse for a conflict at the polls” (184).

As expected, the parade does prompt conflict as the men of Red Wing arm themselves in preparation for aggression and the white men of the community prepare to defend themselves from the “sassy niggers” (185) who are believed will wreck havoc on their quiet Southern community. On the day of the election, Nimbus, the leader of the men at Red Wing, heads the parade riding on the back of Mollie Ainslie’s horse Midnight. It is important to note that Midnight was taken as spoils of war by Ainslie’s brother during an important Civil War battle. Midnight comes to represent, in this moment as well as later, the gains made by the African American community through the Civil War. Additionally, Midnight adds to the performative nature of the event. It is hard to miss the large black stallion making its way through the confused and angry crowd.

In this scene, masculinity is understood through the lens of spectacle. Both the black and white men of the community desire to make a spectacle of their manhood in order to secure their position in the public sphere. Amy Kaplan has written about this need in her article “Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s.” While Kaplan is looking specifically at novels dealing with the growing US imperialism after the ‘close of the frontier,’ her work is useful here as well as it illuminates the ways in which Tourgèe was breaking with literary tradition. Kaplan notes that in many of the novels she has studied the spectacle of

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<sup>63</sup> As there were, in many communities, more black voters than white during this time, white men, much as we see today, often complained that the new laws took away their ability to self-govern.

manliness “does not fully materialize until it is broadcast [break] to a domestic audience” (678). From this Kaplan goes on to suggest that men in these novels of empire building need a female audience in order for the spectacle of masculinity to have the kind of potency that is desired. This is where Tourgèe takes the conventions of these novels and flips them on their head. Instead of masculinity being the solution to this impasse, it is the influence of the feminine that prevents violence from occurring. However, this resolution comes at a high price, namely, the denial of full black manhood and the ironic rendering of white masculine honor.

Upon seeing the potential for violence, Mollie Ainslie takes her horse Midnight from Nimbus and rides ahead of the crowd. The transfer of Midnight from Nimbus to Mollie Ainslie suggests a transfer of power – a power centered in the ability to write the legacy of the Civil War. The white men, who have come to show their strength the face of the danger posed by African American men, acquiesce to Mollie when they allow her to take center stage. The African American men who have chosen to march to the ballot box in a display of newly-won status, also allow Mollie to speak for them at this important juncture. At this moment, while riding a large black stallion with all of its phallic and racial symbolism, she manages to outman the men. She steps into the highly public space in a spectacular performance to reposition to meaning of events and return public honor to the white men of the community. Carefully, she speaks to the assembled mob engaging in the trope of naïve women in order to convince the white men to lay down their weapons. She argues

The worst thing those poor fellows meant to do, gentlemen, was to make a parade over their new found privileges – march up to the polls, vote, and march home again. They are just like a crowd of boys over a

drum and fife, as you know. They carefully excluded from the line all who were not voters, and I had them arranged so that their names would come alphabetically thinking it might be handier for the officers; though I don't know anything about how an election is conducted,' she added, with an ingenuous blush. It's all my fault, gentlemen! I did not think any trouble could come of it, or I would not have allowed it for a moment. I thought it would be better for them to come in order, vote, and go home than to have them scattered about the town and perhaps getting into trouble.

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Her words are, of course, a lie. First and foremost, Ms. Ainslie has more political savvy than to believe a parade complete with drum and fife would not attract negative interest from the white community. Secondly, while Mollie Ainslie had dissuaded the men from Red Wing from doing battle over the location of the polling place, neither the parade nor its organization had been her idea. By arguing that it was her mistaken attempt to maintain control over the black rabble, she removes from the black men the spectacle of their manhood and turns the parade into evidence of their innocent and childlike nature. It is the willingness of the white community to believe this that prevents violence in *this* particular moment. The men of Red Wing are allowed to go to the polls and vote but the spectacle of it has been transformed from a demonstration of their manhood into evidence of their childlike desire for frivolity and gaiety. And the white men are lovingly, but ironically, chastised for their quickness to jump to negative conclusions while still being allowed to maintain their position of benevolent, honorable masculinity. It is important to note that, while the results of this particular election are not made known, the next election discussed is the disastrous 1870 election. The humiliation of black manhood in the eyes of the white community forbears violence in the moment but foreshadows the loss of political and economic rights in the future.

While Mollie Ainslie's impact on the community at large is highlighted in this moment, she also has a great deal of influence at the interpersonal level from this point on in the novel. Following the event on election day, Mollie becomes somewhat of a celebrity in the small Southern community drawing both criticism from the women and curiosity from the local male citizenry. Tourgée writes:

The recognition they<sup>64</sup> received from the gentlemen of Southern birth had in it not a little of the shame-faced curiosity which characterizes the intercourse of men with women whose reputations have been questioned but not entirely destroyed. They were treated with apparent respect, in the school-room, upon the highway, or at the market, by men who would not think of recognizing them when in the company of their mothers, sisters, or wives. Such treatment would have been too galling to be borne had it not been that the spotless-minded girls were all too pure to realize its significance.

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By stepping prominently into the public sphere and by associating with 'negros,' Ainslie had drawn the attention of the community. Men, who would have largely ignored her, are now curious about the woman who breaks all kinds of gender rules and speaks in public in defense of 'negros'. Her strong will garners her some respect but it is complicated by the fact that she gained it by breaking social convention. As a Northern woman, Southern men do not expect the kind of honest courage that they hold in high esteem from a woman even though it is at work for a cause they do not support.<sup>65</sup> Consequently they are both perplexed and fascinated by her behavior. There is no mechanism for

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<sup>64</sup> Mollie Ainslie has been working with another female teacher at the school at Red Wing. It is this second teacher who this pronoun references.

<sup>65</sup> A brief comparison between the Southern response to John Brown, who earned some respect for his courage, and Angelina and Sarah Gimké who were disparaged as prostitutes for speaking to mixed audiences about such salacious topics, points the gender difference the code of Southern honor maintained.

understanding her behavior in the highly formalized Southern society so she occupies the position of “courtesan” – highly desired and, yet, distanced and unwelcome.

This interest brings Ainslie into contact with the Le Moyne family. Hester Le Moyne, the matriarch of one of the oldest, wealthiest families in the community, writes Miss Ainslie a note expressing a kind of backhanded compliment regarding the way in which Mollie helped to avoid catastrophe on election day. Mollie, in her innocence, does not recognize it as such and, rather, uses it as an opening to try to ingratiate herself to the family. In doing so, she meets, Hesden Le Moyne, Hester’s son, Tourgee’s new Southern man, and the gentleman who will become her husband. Her relationship to Hesden Le Moyne is particularly interesting as it leads to Tourgee’s discussion of how a manhood based on a new kind of honor might open the way for the acceptance of African American masculinity. The relationship between Hesden and Mollie Ainslie begins in this place of curiosity. Hesden is curious about the odd Northern schoolteacher and this eventually blooms into a strong respect and admiration for a woman who will hold her ground in the face of public opinion to the contrary. Hester begins to worry about her son’s attachment to Mollie when she realizes that it has become more than mere idle curiosity; however, this worry is predicated not only on Hesden’s developing feelings for Mollie but also for his budding belief that honor might be a private character trait rather than a recognition bestowed by the community. The old Southern matriarch repeatedly suggests that her concern is for what others will think.

Hesden, however, is enamored with the young woman and continues in dialogue with her while growing ever more infatuated. Eventually, Hesden makes the ultimate compromise by expressing to Mollie that there were, on both sides of the Civil War, men

of honor and courage. For a typical Southern gentleman, this is a difficult thing to acknowledge and, interestingly, mimics the language the North utilized during reconciliation.<sup>66</sup> Mollie, whose brother fought for the North, is unimpressed by this confession as she does not recognize it for the radical pronouncement that it is for one of Hesden's position. This should not be surprising as Ainslie has already demonstrated her lack of understanding of Southern culture. It is, however, directly on the tail of this moment that we, as readers, witness Hesden's pivotal change. It comes when Nimbus and Eliab Hill, former slaves of the Le Moyne family, show up at his door under the cover of darkness on the run from a lynch mob that has attacked Red Wing. In an extended piece, Tourgée describes the change that takes over as Hesden confronts all that he thinks that he knows. Tourgée begins with a description of Hesden's character and political perspective.

Hesden Le Moyne was a Southern white man... He was as proud as the proudest of his fellows. The sting of defeat still rankled in his heart. The sense of infinite distance between his race and that unfortunate race whom he pitied so sincerely, to whose future he looked forward with so much apprehension, was as distinct and palpable to him as any one of his compeers. The thousandth part of a drop of blood of the despised race degraded, in his mind, the unfortunate possessor.

He had inherited a dread of the ultimate results of slavery. He wished – it had been accounted sensible in his family to wish – that slavery had never existed. Having existed, they never thought of favoring its extinction. They thought it corrupting and demoralizing to the white race. They felt that it was separating them, year by year, farther and farther from the independent self-reliant manhood, which had built up American institutions and American prosperity. They feared the fruit of this demoralization. *For the sake of the white man*, they wished that the black had never been enslaved. As to the blacks – they did not question the righteousness of their enslavement. They did not care whether it were right or wrong. They simple did not consider them at all. When the war left them

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<sup>66</sup> See David Blight's *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* for more on the language of reconciliation.

free, they simply said, 'Poor fellows!' as they would of a dog without a master. When the blacks were entrusted with the ballots, they said again 'Poor fellows!' regarding them as the blameless instrument by which a bigoted and revengeful North sought to degrade and humiliate a foe overwhelmed only by the accident of numbers; the colored race being to these Northern people like the cat with whose paw the monkey dragged his chestnuts from the fire. Hesden had only wondered what the effect of these things would be upon 'the South;' meaning by 'the South' that regnant class to which his family belonged – a part of which, by a queer synecdoche, stood for the whole.

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In this section, Tourgée sets forth a complicated understanding of racism and the Southern character. Rather than describing Hesden as a money-hungry, ex-slave owner who hates the race his family had degraded for so long, Tourgée suggests something else. He writes Hesden as a product of his culture and a man who feels not hatred but pity for the blacks that he has been taught to protect because of their natural inferiority. Using Hesden as his example, Tourgée argues that the hatred that Southerners felt toward the Fifteenth Amendment was directed, by some, not towards former slaves but rather Radical Republicans from the North. While blacks needed to be returned to their former status as non-citizens, it was not because there was a feeling of hatred but because there was a belief that they were incapable of self-governance. The Fifteenth Amendment was an experiment destined for failure. In his willingness to portray the Southern character as complex with the possibility for gentle feeling, Tourgée opens up a space for change and growth much as Harriet Beecher Stowe had done in the character of Augustine St. Claire. While there were men in the South like Simon Legree who hated African Americans on principle, there were others who exhibited a paternalistic regard for what they claimed as their charges. As the novel develops, Tourgée argues that it was this type of man who

was capable of challenging the nature of masculine honor in the South and opening up a space to see the African American man as a potential equal.

Tourgée continues by outlining how that change might take place. Interestingly, it starts in the realm of sentiment. This returns us to the influence of Mollie Ainslie and also suggests that the kind of manhood that can truly redeem the South is one that allows itself to feel and to sympathize. Rational argumentation alone will be wholly insufficient in Tourgée's assessment. It must be coupled with the musings of the heart. In this way, the following scene mimics Stowe's discussion of the senator who is confronted with the runaway Eliza and her son. It is Hesden Le Moyne's ability to feel that creates the possibility for change. The novel continues:

His love for his old battle-steed (Midnight), and his curious interest in its new possessor, had led him to consider the experiment at Red Wing with some care.<sup>67</sup> His pride and interest in Eliab as a former slave of his family had still further fixed his attention and awakened his thought. And, finally, his acquaintance with Mollie Ainslie had led him unconsciously to sympathize with the object of her constant care and devotion.

So, while he stood there beside the stricken man (Eliab)... he had begun to *doubt*: to doubt the infallibility of his hereditary notions; to doubt the super-excellence of Southern manhood, and the infinite superiority of Southern womanhood; to doubt the incapacity of the negro for self-maintenance and civilization; to doubt, in short, all those dogmas which constitute the differential characteristics of 'the Southern man.' He had gone so far – a terrible distance to one of his origin – to admit the possibility of error. He had begun to question – God forgive him, if it seemed like sacrilege – he had begun to question whether the South might not have been wrong – might not still be wrong – wrong in the principle and practice of slavery, wrong in the theory and face of secession and rebellion, wrong in the hypothesis of hate on the part of the conquerors, wrong in the assumption of exceptional and unapproachable excellence.

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<sup>67</sup> We learn earlier in the novel that Midnight had been Hesden Le Moyne's horse and he had lost the horse in the same battle that Mollie's brother had obtained him. It is speculated that Hesden and Mollie's brother had actually attempted to kill each other in the battle but neither had been successful.

In this description, Tourgée references multiple emotional states – “love,” “pride,” “interest,” and “sympathize” – to describe the catalyst for change in Hesden Le Moyne. It is not logic or argumentation that forces Hesden to reevaluate his perspective but an emotional connection to his former slave, a growing devotion to the Northern school teacher, and, even, a love for his black stallion. In recognizing these emotions, Hesden begins to challenge some of the cultural biases he has been reared with and, by so doing, reconsidering what exactly it meant to be a “Southern man.” As he looks with pity and grief on the visage of Nimbus and Eliab, two beaten and broken black men, his heart stirs with sympathy. While he begins from a place of pity, he eventually comes to a place of outrage and a demand for justice. Nimbus, who was believed to have killed a member of the lynch mob, tells Hesden that he must run and begs his ex-master to take care of the injured Eliab. Hesden attempts to argue that Nimbus must be protected as he “had a right to do it” (292). This is the first time in the novel that a white man refers positively to a black man’s rights; whereas under the laws of slavery, a black man had no right to self-protection, Hesden is now claiming that Nimbus has just that right. This is a long way from the masculinity demonstrated by the patriarch Potestatem Desmit. Nimbus, however, corrects him:

Dar ain’t no doubt o’ dat, Marse Hesden, but I’s e larned dat de right ter du a ting an’ de doing’ on’t is two mighty diff’reent tings, when it’s a cullu’d man ez does it. I hed a right ter buy a plantation an’ raise terbacker; an’ ‘Liab hed a right ter teach an’ preach; an’ we both hed a right ter vote for ennybody we had a mind ter choos. An’ so we did; an’ dat’s all we done, tu. An’ now h’yer’s what’s come on’t, Marse Hesden.

(292)

Tourgée, throughout the novel, has created in Nimbus a black character who does all the right things and is all the right things. Although not well educated, Nimbus is intelligent, talented, hardworking and frugal. He had created a model community at Red Wing and has watched it be destroyed by white men who were jealous of his success. When Nimbus speaks these words, they have an added weight given his history. He knows through sad experience that even proving himself a model citizen is not enough to be recognized as worthy of the same rights as other men. He knows the truth about the language of masculinity and recognizes that it serves as a protection to white men rather than a standard for all men.

It is following this revelation that Hesden has a moment that rivals Huck Finn's apology to the slave Jim. He responds:

"I am afraid you are right, Nimbus," said the white man, with a sense of self-abasement he had never thought to feel before one of the inferior race.

(292)

Whereas to this moment, Hesden had believed that ill treatment of the African American community is a sectional sin, he had not yet considered that African Americans were potentially equal to whites. Here, however, he begins to wonder if the supposed debasement of African Americans might not be a product of their experience under slavery rather than their inherent lack and he becomes convinced that it is only honorable for the South to give the African American community a fair opportunity to develop their own talents and capacities. Hesden also begins to consider that it might be the honorable thing to submit to the demands of the conqueror; by including this, Tourgée, in a moment that mimics the work of Booker T. Washington, is opening the door for Southerners who

are unconvinced of his portrayal of Nimbus to consider giving the black community the opportunity to make of themselves what they might. And in so doing, Tourgée believes white southerners would eventually come to recognize the humanity of the black man.<sup>68</sup> As Hesden considers Nimbus, Eliab and the work that had been done at Red Wing “he began to realize how his ancient prejudice was giving way before the light of what he could not but regard as truth” (323). Although “defeat does not mean a new birth, and that warfare leaves *men* unchanged by its results, whatever may be the effects on nations and societies” (319-20), his relationship with African American men and Northern radicals has begun to work on the sensibilities of Hesden Le Moyne.

From this point on in the novel, Hesden’s discussion of Radical politics and his relationship to African Americans centers on the concept of honor. In a radical reimagining of the honor described by Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Hesden understands the concept as an individual and private experience rather than the bestowal of public acclaim or recognition. He believes that it is only honorable that he protect Eliab and secure medical attention for the wounded man. It becomes the honorable thing to do to help Nimbus escape from the clutches of the Klu Klux Klan. And in doing these things, Hesden’s understanding of himself and his relationship to honor is tested yet again.

In order to protect Eliab, Hesden has a hole cut in the ceiling of his private room. This is done so that the injured man can be hidden in the attic without incurring the notice of others. However, by cutting a hole in the ceiling, Hesden discovers a lost will from which he learns that his grandfather had committed fraud and stolen the Le Moyne property from a relative in the North. The symbolism is clear; protecting Eliab requires

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<sup>68</sup> It is important to note that the entirety of the work does not fully support the ideas of Booker T. Washington but rather makes use of that rhetoric in moments to open the door to individuals who might be persuaded by it.

that Hesden Le Moyne confront his family's past and make reparations. Hesden explains this to his mother, without informing her of the way in which the will was found, and she agrees that their family is honor-bound to correct the errors of their ancestors if the correct heir can be found. Hester, who has a very different understanding of honor than the one that her son is developing, stands in for those who may maintain a more traditional vision of what it means to live honorably and, consequently, her agreement suggests that, should the South recognize the harm it or its ancestors have done to the African American community, they become honor-bound to rectify the injustice.

Meanwhile, Mollie continues to push Hesden to acknowledge the humanity and honor of the people that he once believed to be by very nature inferior to himself. While she loves Hesden and knows that he is entirely devoted to her, she refuses to marry him until he can acknowledge that her work as a "nigger-teacher" is an honorable one. She goes so far as to tell him: "When you can say to me, 'I am as proud of your work as of my own honor – so proud that I wish it to be known of all men, and that all men should know that I approve,' then you may come to me. Till then, farewell'" (350)! She does this because she has come to realize that "the former master must be healed by the slow medicament of time before he could be able to recognize in all men the sanctity of manhood, as well as that the freedman must be taught to know and to defend his rights" (355).

Hesden's transformation is not yet complete and, before he can be held to the bar which the northern school teacher has held up for him, he must have some additional experiences. The most important of these is the loss of his property as the proper living heir of the Le Moyne plantation is discovered. In an unfortunately overly formulaic

move, the heir to the Le Moyne plantation is none other than Mollie Ainslie. However, this see-through plot device does allow Tourgée to suggest the missing piece of the Reconstruction formula. Mollie Ainslie decides to allow the Le Moynes to maintain the property given that they promise to secure the land at Red Wing, which has come under litigation, for the African American community. While mercy may be necessary to reunify the nation, it only is successful once those on the receiving end recognize it as such. If the South continues to see a return of their legal rights as their due, justice to the African American community will never be achieved. Only once the South has recognized their fault and expressed a willingness to expiate for it can any sign of mercy over the issue of war reparations be justified.

Once Hesden and, by extension, his mother, Hester, recognize their error and the depth of their redemption, the transformation of this genteel plantation owner comes full circle. It is at this point that Hesden writes to Mollie Ainslie requesting that he might come to her, a request that she readily grants. He goes to her only to discover that she has gone west to create a community for the refugees from Red Wing. In this she has been successful and has, due to her wise investments, amassed quite a fortune. She joins her fortune to Hesden's and returns with him to the South as his bride. It is there that he attempts to insert himself into the politics of the South as a Radical Republican believing that, finally, the Southern community at large are willing to, at the very least, give African American men the chance to prove themselves both at the ballot and in the sphere of economics. He has, unsurprisingly, misjudged his neighbors. Although he tries actively to convince his fellow Southerners to allow African Americans the right to prove

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their capacity, drawing on the language of masculine honor, he is unsuccessful and, eventually, he retreats to the North.

Before his final exit, however, Hesden Le Moyne is brought face to face with an abused and worn-out Nimbus. Having been on the run for three years at this point, Nimbus returns to seek out Mollie Ainslie and learn what has become of his family. In doing so, Nimbus is reacquainted with his former master. Learning of Nimbus' fate, Hesden becomes the servant as he attempts to care for, warm and feed the man who once had served him. While some of the language Hesden has used to convince his fellow Southerners of the importance of giving African American men free access to the vote have to this point been tinged with arguments as to the superiority of white men, it can be ascertained that that particular rhetoric is part of a larger attempt to bring his neighbors along slowly to his way of thinking. His actions demonstrate his new understanding of the equality between the races. However, as he had mused previously, "it did not seem strange that they should feel as they did, but rather that he should so soon have escaped from the tyrannical bias of mental habit. He saw that the struggle against it must be long and bitter, and he determined not to yield his convictions to the prejudices of others" (365). The disparity between his own understanding and his belief that the convictions of others needed to be challenged gradually is brought out in the end of the novel when he goes to Washington D.C. to argue for the spread of education for whites in the South as well as blacks. By educating whites, he argues, they will come to understand the error of their ways and perceive their own bias while blacks continue to be allowed to make headway through the enforcement of federal laws. While, perhaps, overly simplistic, his

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plan is based on the fact that the South needs to be reeducated to recognize the manhood of those to whom they would deny the vote.

The fight to allow blacks the freedom to express their own ability is insufficient for the true recognition of black manhood according to the author Charles Chesnutt. As if written to address the ideas contained in Tourgée's *Bricks Without Straw*, Charles Chesnutt's novel, *The Colonel's Dream* considers the possibility of the kind of reeducation that Hesden Le Moyne apparently undergoes. A lesser known text, *The Colonel's Dream*, has gained prominence in the last decade as scholars have begun to analyze the relationship of Colonel French to the black citizens of his small Southern town. In this novel, like *The Marrow Of Tradition*, Chesnutt argues that economic and legal changes are insufficient to protect the rights of free people but that a basic revision of social expectations as well as a reordering of the patriarchy is required. Early research suggested that Colonel French was Chesnutt's ideal white reformer; however, more recent scholarship suggests that Chesnutt was, in fact, commenting on the inability of even a liberal reformer to fully recognize his own racism. Wiley Cash argues that Colonel French has a "capacity to employ a form of liberal racism that relies upon the same white supremacist beliefs promoted by men like Henry Grady in order to sustain the stereotype of black inferiority" (24). Although I agree that Colonel French is a failed reformer, what is most interesting about this novel is the emphasis that Chesnutt places on the importance of white men recognizing black man as both fully human and fully masculine. It isn't just that Colonel French doesn't recognize African Americans as fully human but, rather, that he doesn't acknowledge the masculinity of African American men. Additionally, I believe that what scholars Wiley Cash and others like Matthew Wilson

miss in their readings of *The Colonel's Dream* is a larger understanding of the position of the black manhood in the language of citizenship and the way it was categorically denied a place in the rational discourse of both politics and the public sphere. Colonel French is, by way of his own prejudices, never fully able to grant black men full manhood but he attempts, nonetheless, to allow them access to the public sphere. His failure to provide any lasting benefit to the black community suggests, among other things, that access to economic and political advancement is, by itself, insufficient.

In Colonel French, we have a blending of both masculine and feminine characteristics. As we learn in *The Colonel's Dream*, French represents both a Northern capitalist entrepreneur and a Southern gentleman linked by a kind of benevolent patriarchalism to his ex-slaves. In his relationship as former patriarch, French feels a desire to care for those who once cared for him, and, in his position as capitalist entrepreneur, he desires to get the greatest efficiency out of his workers without regard to the dynamics of race. In addition to this, French represents a kind of feminine idealism about the possibility of interracial relationships that Chesnut saw in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Added to all this, of course, is the continentalism suggested by his name.

As the novel opens, Colonel French, who importantly in the North is referred to as Mr. French, is selling his shares of a bagging business in order to avoid financial ruin when the company is swept up in a merger. In discussing his business dealing in New York, Chesnut revealing that the selling of the business caused many to lose their jobs however he writes "Mr. French may have known it, or guessed it, but he was between the devil and the deep sea – a victim rather than an accessory – he must take what he could

get, or lose what he had” (85). This statement is indicative of French in many ways; he does not go out of his way to harm his workers but when harm is done he makes the best of a bad situation and skips town. None of the money he secures from the deal goes to help those who have been laid off; instead, he uses it to start an investment in his childhood home of Claredon. This investment, again, is begun with a desire to help uplift a sagging economy and, as he gets further involved, provide support for the recently freed slaves, but French’s inability to see the individuals he does business with as anything other than possible assets means that his help is only partial and eventually backfires, causing great harm. This inability leads him to misread the town of Claredon while failing to consistently recognize the full humanity of the black men he attempts to help. Additionally, his faith in the power of capitalism to rejuvenate the South is challenged as Chesnutt suggests that it is merely to replace one dehumanizing economic system with another.

It is, however, important to note that while Colonel French is deeply flawed as a reformer, he is not, as some have claimed, a static character. Through his relationships with both African American men and white women, French exhibits some moments of true realization. They are insufficient to change the realities of the Reconstruction South but they do add glimmers of hope to an otherwise dim novel. Colonel French’s relationship to the freemen in his community has been rightly deemed paternalistic. He treats all of the freemen that he has dealings with kindly but not with any particular respect. The closest relationship he has with a black man is the one that he shares with his body servant Peter, a man who had been given to the Colonel as a young man and had been both a playmate and servant. Deftly, Chesnutt demonstrates the ways in which ex-

master and slave easily fell back into known patterns of behavior by having the Colonel purchase the labor of his ex-slave in an attempt to keep Peter from having to serve time for vagrancy. Historically, many laws written in the period following Radical Reconstruction were used to insure that lone black men were severely restricted in their movement. One of the underlying motivations for laws surrounding vagrancy or contracted labor was fear of the lone black man. The Colonel does not seem to share that fear but he does not go much further. The Colonel treats Peter with great kindness but see him as a playmate for his young son rather than an equal. Interestingly, for the most part, Chesnutt draws Peter as a flat character; one of the most prominent black characters of the novel is really a caricature of the happy ex-slave who desired nothing more than to remain with his former master and dote on his white family. However, much like the use he had made of the character of Uncle Julius, Chesnutt brings forward an underlying truth that is born out as the relationship between these two men develops.<sup>69</sup> By making use of this kind of stock character, Chesnutt performs a transformation throughout the body of the novel.

Colonel first is reacquainted with Peter when he visits the cemetery to show his son, Phil, the family plot. Peter is there maintaining the grave of his former master out of respect for the family that he considers great. He explains

Well, suh, I b'longed ter de fambly, an' I ain' got no chick ner chile er my own, livin', an dese hyuh dead folks 'pears mo' closer ter me den anybody e'se. De cullud folks don' was'e much time wid a ole man w'at ain' got nothin', an' dese hyuh new w'ite folks wa't is come up sence de, wah, ain' got no use fer niggers, no dat dey don' b'long ter nobody no mo'; so w'en I ain' got nothin' e'se ter do, I comes round' hyuh, whar I knows

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<sup>69</sup> Uncle Julius is a character from Charles Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman*. There has been some controversy regarding the reading of this character; however, most critics agree that Uncle Julius offers a coded critique of Old South.

ev'ybody and e'vybody knows me, an' trims de rose bushes an' pulls up de weeds and keeps de grass down jes' lak I s'pose Mars Henry'd 'a' had it done ef he'd 'a' lived huh in de old home, stidder 'way off yandah in de Norf, whar he so busy makin' money dat he done fergot all 'bout his own folks.

(Chesnutt, 103).

Notably, Peter's words betray a kind of nostalgia for life before the war. Clearly, Chesnutt is not writing, like Joel Chandler Harris or Margaret Mitchell, a plantation novel demonstrating the glory of the Antebellum South. Nor is he attempting to suggest that slavery was a benevolent institution; although, his work does argue that abolishing slavery while leaving in place other systems and attitudes of racism created a material reality for freemen that was similar in many particulars to that of the "peculiar institution." Rather, it is simply that when Peter feels unmoored from society, he returns to the cemetery to care for the graves of those with whom he feels a connection. Chesnutt is doing two important things in this moment. He is attempting to demonstrate how even well-meaning liberal whites could be taken in by the idea that their benevolence towards the African American community somehow secured them a place of enduring hero worship thus suggesting a chink in the armor of liberal reform. And secondly, by placing the reunion at the cemetery, he is set the stage to allow Peter to stand in for the memory of all those who had perished before emancipation. This becomes important as the story develops. It is of great importance that the Colonel encounters Peter in the family cemetery rather than any other locale as it links Peter with both history and death.

As the novel continues, Peter's labor is purchased and the old man becomes Phil's playmate and babysitter. While this move both emasculates Peter and suggests that Colonel French will never see Peter as being on his level, it also opens up a space for Chesnutt to develop a frame narrative much like he had in his Uncle Julius tales. In

caring for the young boy, Peter tells Phil a story about a haunted mansion. This tale has yet to be recognized for the powerful work that it is. In an attempt to warn Phil about the power of a black cat, Peter tells the boy about a haunted house where a black cat was found to speak. In telling the story, Peter first has to explain to the naïve youth that “a ha’nted house is a house whar dey’s ha’nts!” and that “Ha’nts, honey, is the sperrits er dead folks, dat comes back an’ hangs roun’ whar dey use’ ter lib” (217). These haunts are the spirits, not of the former French family, but “only de bad ones, w’at has be’n so wicked dey can’t rest in dey graves” (217). In this description, it is clear that Peter is suggesting something about the horrors of the past and the power that it has to continue to effect the present in negative yet indefinable ways. While the French family may not be implicated in some of the greater horrors of slavery, a common feature of post emancipation narratives is the delineation between varying kinds of masters and mistresses, the horrors are there none the less. And given the characters engaged in the telling of this story, those horrors must be related to slavery and its effects.

The story of the black cat returns to haunt the narrative as the relationship between ex-master and slave is brought to a crisis point. In one of the more action packed moments of the novel, Peter is killed in his attempt to save the young Phil from being hit by a train. In one moment, future and history are killed in a crash. Both the incidents leading up to the crash and the response from French and the community after the crash speak volumes about Chesnutt’s vision of the intertwining of past, present and future. First and foremost, it is important to note whose actions are responsible for the loss of the young boy. In the moments before the crash, Phil is playing at his father’s feet when Peter leaves to run an errand for his master. It is while Phil is in his father’s care that he

wanders off and puts himself in danger of the oncoming train. His father, in the anguish of a heartbroken father, condemns himself. Chesnutt writes:

It required all the father's fortitude to sustain the blow, with the added agony of self-reproach that he himself had been unwittingly the cause of it. Had he not sent old Peter into the house, the child would not have been left alone. Had he kept his eye upon Phil until Peter's return the child would not have strayed away. He had neglected his child, while the bruised and broken old black man in the room below had given his life to save him.

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While the language could be ignored as the ramblings of a distraught father, in the world of the novel, it is an important perspective. Seeing the destruction of his future, Colonel French realizes the part that he played in the loss – a likeness of the destruction of the Southern future both black and white.

When the men, Peter and Colonel French, realize that Phil is missing, they begin a search for him. In doing so, they learn that he has bounded out to chase the black cat that Peter has told him can speak. The link to history is clear; Phil chases after the reality of the history of slavery. Peter, in an attempt to save the young boy, is literally tripped up by history when he stumbles over the cat and falls in front of the moving train. When Colonel French arrives on the scene, Peter is already dead but Phil appears to be unharmed. He appears to have escaped with only a small cut on his forehead. And so, a nearby Negro carries Phil back to his home. Chesnutt writes "A Negro's strong arms bore the child to the house" suggesting a protective nature. It is interesting to note that it is not the boy's father who encircles the boy in his arms.

Tragically, the boy's external wounds mask the internal injuries and the boy dies hours later from internal bleeding. Again, this works as a symbolic representation of the

effects of history on both black and whites in the South. While whites may try to chase their history, they wind up appearing uninjured but the damage runs deep while blacks are continually tripped up by their relationship to history in a cataclysmic dance that has the potential to leave them disfigured both physically and psychically.

It is from this place that Colonel French makes the determination to have Peter buried in the whites' only cemetery. In the article "The Colonel's Dream Deferred: A Consideration of Chesnut's Liberal Racist," Wiley Cash suggests that the Colonel's decision to have Peter buried in the white cemetery next to his son is a sign of his paternalism. It is here that Cash mistakes Colonel French's motivation. While it is clear that Colonel French does not yet see black men as full equals, he has attempted to open up a space for developing a relationship with blacks based on something other than paternalism. The Colonel's burial of Peter is an attempt to recognize him as a man; he chooses not only to bury him next to his son but also in a beautiful mahogany coffin. The work of Kirk Savage in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* demonstrates the importance of memorials during this period. There was a great deal of debate about how the war would be memorialized as well as who would be honored in public sculptures and art. It is in that context that we must understand the Colonel's decision to give Peter full honors in death. To bury Peter in the white cemetery is to symbolically include his history with that of the white master class. It is an attempt to give honor to a history that had been forgotten and degraded. It may be insufficient in the realm of the material, but it is the beginning of an attempt to heal certain types of psychic wounding.

It is interesting to posit what might have happened had Peter been a female character. Given the context of the novel, it is difficult to imagine the community responding as they do to Peter's burial. While these honors come too little to late, they cannot be accepted by men who have built an understanding of themselves as men on the concept of racial difference. These are the same kinds of men who, in *The Marrow of Tradition* were involved in the aborted lynching as well as race riot. According to Cash, "to mar the dead in incomprehensible acts of mutilation after lynching and to mar the dead by consigning them forever to a place in the national imaginary where they oscillate between being children and beast, a place where they never are, in Chesnut's terms, granted the right to be men" was a national sin (177). So, although this honor comes after it has any meaningful material benefit to Peter, it is necessary to remember the importance of memorial and memorial building to Chesnut during this period. Not just in Chesnut, but generally, the political debates surrounding the development of memorial were part of the discourse surrounding the very meaning of the Civil War. And a representation of black men as fully equal to white men, even in death, is one that cannot be abided by the community at large. The subsequent disinterment by mob points to the ripping apart of that dream. While the Colonel may wish to develop a relationship with black men on the level of equality, he is held back by the culture of racism that surrounds him.

The disinterment of the former slave also points to the permanence of both memory and history. Much as the haunts that reside within the old plantation mansion, there are certain horrors that cannot be put aside quickly. Turning Peter's definition of haunts on its head, it is the memory of those wronged that continue to play on the minds

of the living. It is also the hatred formed by the system of slavery that disinters these memories. This hatred is a powerful remnant left over from the social structure produced under slavery and it is one that Chesnut would argue was maintained by the social structure of honor-based masculinity and economic inequality. To explain how a belief in the inequality of the races might be mobilized to outright hatred of blacks, Chesnut writes:

White and black worshipped the same God, in different churches. There had been a time when coloured people filled the galleries of the white churches, and white ladies had instilled into black children the principles of religion and good morals. But as white and black had grown nearer to each other in condition, they had grown farther apart in feeling. It was difficult for the poor lady, for instance, to patronize the children of the well-to-do Negro or mulatto; nor was the latter inclined to look up to white people who had started, in his memory, from a position but a little higher than his own. In an era of change, the benefits gained thereby seemed scarcely to offset the difficulties of readjustment.

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As the economic inequality between blacks and whites narrowed, the need to maintain some kind of superiority over former slaves became stronger and stronger. Consequently, contrary to Colonel French's belief, the economic recovery of the South did not mean the end of racism. As long as it was possible for blacks to maintain a higher economic position than whites in the new order, there would be the potential for jealousy and rage. In Peter's case, while there was no economic disparity, the honor given him by a wealthy white man was insupportable to this same group of people.

Peter's death is not the only time that Colonel French is confronted with the dead body of a black man nor is it the only time he is forced to witness rabid racism and its effects. In addition to his relationship with Peter, Colonel French has one other extended

dealing with a black man, Bud Johnson. This relationship also ends with the death of the black man; however, Bud's death is deemed infamous by the community at large rather than an example of honorable service. Soon after Colonel French's engagement to Laura Treadwell, her servant Catharine approaches the couple about a problem her husband is facing with the law. Having come to find her after a small spat, her husband, Bud, was picked up for vagrancy and his labor was sold to Mr. Fetters as payment of his fines. In this portion of the story, however, the black man is not sold to a kindly white reformer but rather, as was substantially more common, to a convict labor farm. In this way, we, as readers, are presented with a more realistic rendering of Jim Crow law regarding labor and vagrancy. Mr. Fetters, as his name suggests, was known throughout the community as being especially ruthless and for maltreating the convicts on his farm. After a few months of experiencing Mr. Fetter's discipline, Bud ran away from the farm only to be rearrested. With the new charges, it was determined that his labor would once again be sold in order to secure payment for the original fine and added fees. Catharine approaches Laura and her fiancée with the hope that Colonel French could purchase Bud's labor as "Bud is a good wukker we'n folks treats him right' an' he had n'never had no trouble nowhar befo' he come hyuh, suh" (276). Much like Stowe's rendering of slavery, Chesnutt will show that even good men who want to help have their hands tied by the racist laws of the land.

Colonel French's response to this plea is a complicated one. He notes quickly that he also had heard rumors about the convict farm that Mr. Fetter's maintained; his opinion of Fetters not being particularly high. He muses on the fact that he had seen Bud Johnson the day that he first was arrested and felt that "The man had not looked like a criminal;

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that he was surly and desperate may as well have been due to a sense of rank injustice as to an evil nature” (277). This original response is important because it suggests that Colonel French is willing to grant recognition of injustice and a sense of righteous anger to a black man. However, right on the heels of this thought, he addresses Laura, not Catharine, and explains that he “will attend to this; it is a matter about which you should not be troubled” suggesting that he has determined to help Bud out a sense of responsibility to his fiancée; a perspective that gains further strength from the fact that, when he is unable to help Bud, he feels the greatest shame telling Laura “It’s the first thing I’ve undertaken for your sake, Laura, and I’ve got to report failure, so far” (280). And yet, his desire is to allow Bud to “work it out as a free man” (277) or, essentially, loan Bud the money to pay his fines rather than purchasing his labor. It is fine nuance but an important one; it is a plan that would allow Bud to maintain his personhood both legally and in the eyes of the community. Clearly, Colonel French’s understanding of Bud’s predicament is incomplete due to the Colonel’s inability to see Bud fully as a man but there is a desire there for justice. Unfortunately, this will be insufficient.

There is an additional irony to this situation that is clearly manifest when Colonel French visits Mr. Fetters to attempt to pay off Bud’s fines with interest. On his way out to the convict farm, he contemplates how best to approach Fetters musing “With Fetters the hiring of the Negro was purely commercial transaction, conditioned upon a probable profit, for the immediate payment of which, and a liberal bonus, he would doubtless relinquish his claim upon Johnson’s services” (279). Not surprisingly to those of us who understand the mentality of Southern honor, this is not the case. Upon putting his request forward to Turner, Fetter’s agent, he is told “We want to keep ‘im; he’s a bad nigger, an’

we've got to handle a lot of 'em, an' we need 'im for an example – he keeps us in trainin'" (279). Ironically, to Feters and Turner, Bud Johnson is an individual with a specific history and personality while to Colonel French he is an interchangeable laborer. Feters' perspective is one fueled by racism and a desire to maintain white superiority in the South while French's vision is based on a capitalist economy that places a high priority on efficiency and free labor.

It is this same vision that had allowed French to place a black man in a position of leadership at the work being done to build a new mill. When his original foreman quits because he feels that the colonel has treated him unfairly – he actually says that in commanding him to do the work in a certain way, Colonel French had treated him like “a nigger to be ordered around” (258) – he promotes George Brown, a black man, to the position of foreman. This decision prompts the white brick workers to lay down their tools and refuse to work; to his credit, French responds by paying them their wages and dismissing them. His defense of his decision is rooted in the language of capitalism. He explains:

These people have got to learn that we live in an industrial age, and success demands of an employer that he utilise (sic) the most available labour. [break] Matters of feeling were all well enough in some respects – no one valued more highly than the colonel the right to choose his own associates – but the right to work and to do one's work, was fundamental, as was the right to have one's work done by those who could do it best. Even a healthy social instinct might be perverted into an unhealthy and unjust prejudice; most things evil were the perversion of good.

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French's desire to promote George Brown was based, not an desire to defend the rights of black men, but rather to defend his rights as mill owner to get the best work

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done for his dollar. Consequently, he operates under a vision that is significantly less detrimental to black labor than some in the South, who would pervert their own business interests to defend white racial superiority, but he is not willing to meet with blacks on an equal playing field in social situations. In many respects, he is Booker T. Washington's ideal white reformer rather than Charles Chesnut's. It could also be argued that Colonel French places no laborer, black or white, on equal ground with himself being, as he is, concerned with efficiency over individuality.

However, as argued earlier, Colonel French is not a static character and as the novel continues, he begins to see his relationship to Bud Johnson, specifically, in a new light. Perhaps it is because Bud Johnson is such a hard worker or perhaps it is because the convict labor farm operates on principles that are antithetical to his understanding of the free market; nevertheless, Colonel French becomes increasingly involved with Bud Johnson and his wife. He visits the convict labor farm and is horrified at conditions there. As he comes to understand what it means to make Bud an example to his fellow prisoners, Colonel French attempts to intervene to save the life of a man he had only recently come to know. Using the connections that he has, Colonel French puts in motion an escape plan; however, in the escape Bud Johnson kills a man and injures Fetter's son. These events lead, tragically, to a lynching.

When Colonel French hears of the lynching, he responds in a way that critiques the very theatricality of lynching by refusing to hear any of the details of the event. While it might be argued that he is disinterested, his response comes from a sense of overwhelming grief. The research conducted by Harvey Young in "The Black Body as Souvenir in American Lynching" helps to historicize French's reaction. Southern

lynching was, by its very nature, highly performative. And, as such, it was both a participatory event and one that was heavily memorialized. Picture postcards and pieces of the remains were taken as souvenirs by members of the mob. It was an event that many would talk about and testify regarding. To choose not to listen was a radical step; one that suggested a kind of sorrow that has no voice. Young explains it beautifully when, in describing the lynching of a young man named George Ward, he writes:

In their reconstitution and remembrance of the lynching victim, the crowd had neither the opportunity nor the occasion to know the actual person being lynched. Considering the racial politics of the period and the fact that lynchings were intended to stem the social advancement of African Americans, it seems likely that the body part as souvenir prompted thoughts of an imagined and perhaps mythical construct of the black body. It was not George Ward's toe. It was a black toe. Some nigger's toe. This disavowal, through the creation of a generalized substitute, of the particular (the referent) threatened to absent the actual body from the lynching scene without jeopardizing its symbolic value as both souvenir and fetish. Perhaps the best way of understanding how Ward could disappear within the recollected spectacle that dismembered him is to consider two very different scenarios involving his remains. In the first, the crowd descends upon his body and collects pieces as souvenirs for the event they have witnessed. In the second, Ward's family, after the crowd has departed, searches the lynching site for pieces of the lynching victim to bury. Within each scenario, the body part triggers a different conception of Ward. Surely, the crowd and the family members did not think of the same person, in the same manner, in their respective interactions with his bodily remains.

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Imagining the horror of those who loved George Ward, it is easy to imagine them desiring not to know the details surrounding his death. The desire to remember one as a living, psychically whole human being is a pronounced one: it is part of what made the decision by Emmett Till's mother to allow for an open casket both so shocking and so powerful. Viewed through this light, the desire to remain ignorant as to Bud Johnson's

final hours is an indication that Colonel French prefers to remember him as a (what term characterizes his relationship with him) man rather than a cautionary tale.

It is after the murder of Bud Johnson that Colonel French decides to go back to the North as he declares the South irredeemable. However, the lessons he has learned through the deaths of Peter and Bud do not seem to remain with him. He may be able to recognize the humanity of the suffering, of the martyr, or of the man willing to die for his friend; however, that knowledge is not transferable. He does not see that same humanity in those African American men living around him. This is made evident in the final scene of the novel as Colonel French offers a handout to a man serving as a black porter who he had known in the South. The man does not desire a handout; he does not wish to receive charity. He wishes to be treated as a man and he makes it known to Colonel French in no uncertain terms.

‘Thank you, suh,’ said the porter, ‘but I’d rather not take it. I’m a porter now, but I wa’n’t always one, and hope I won’t always be one. And during all the time I taught school in Clarendon, you was the only white man that ever treated me quite like a man – and our folks just like people – and if you won’t think I’m presuming, I’d rather not take the money’

(358)

The porter’s rationale for not taking Colonel French’s money is extremely important; he doesn’t want to take charity from the only individual who came close to treating him like a respectable man. Northern charity is not what is required to undo the hurt of generations of slavery. The recognition of the reality of the past, the acceptance of guilt on the part of both the North and the South, a commitment to justice and the freedom of opportunity are what are demanded in Chesnut’s novel. All of these demands require the recognition of

the personhood of the slave and the common manhood of the freedman. Colonel French responds to the porter's request by doing what Chesnutt would like to see reformers do for the freedman. The Colonel takes down the porter's address and using his past knowledge of the man, French helps him to find a place to continue his studies at the university. This is the help that one man would give another man and it is what Chesnutt demands of those who would wish to reform the South.

Read together, these two novels illuminate the need for white reformers to recognize the manhood of the freedman and for conservative forces to be challenged in their dehumanizing rhetoric and actions. They suggest that the rhetoric of reform required a important revising if it was not to continue to fall into the mistakes of the well-meaning abolitionist movement. The manhood of freedman needed to be respected and the injustices leveled against former slaves was not an excuse for speaking or writing about them as mere victims. Justice demanded that those injured need not depend upon the charity of others; to do less than recognize the manhood of the black man would mean that all attempts to secure his rights would fail.

### **Appendix: Terminology**

Any attempt to understand how the work of moral suasion impacts the rhetoric of black masculinity has to come to grips with some rather slippery terms such as human, man, masculine, manly, and male. As such, it is important to outline the way such terms are used in this study. To begin with, the term male is used to describe individuals who are biologically male. Since the concept of transgendered individuals was not widely accepted during the nineteenth century, and if seen, was relegated to the fringes and outer edges of the social sphere, this study will not attempt to separate out issues of transgendered verses cis-gendered individuals. Rather, I use the term male to describe individuals whose primary sexual characteristics corresponded with nineteenth-century understandings of maleness. As the term man can refer to both an individual who is considered biologically male and the human race in its entirety, it often becomes tricky to determine when an author is referring to male bodies and when an author is discussing humanity in the broadest sense. Given the emphasis placed on the separation of the spheres during this time, it makes the most sense that when a text is referring to any kind of political right that the term man is referring to male citizens. However, given that during the nineteenth century, a burgeoning feminist movement was coming into its own, there are times when rhetorical moves are made to highlight either the inclusion or lack of female voices. This could be done through the use of the term man. In these instances, I point out the rhetorical slight of hand as part of my analysis of the language of the text. Human is used to reference individuals of both genders who were considered to be biologically related and part of the “human race.” This terminology becomes important because in many cases blacks were not considered to be fully human. According to some

apologists for slavery, blacks occupied a space between humans and primates. Thus to claim equal humanity was to claim biological relatedness.

The terms masculine and manly are considerably more difficult to parse out and, given their complicated use in everyday nineteenth century parlance, rather slippery. The term masculine, in this study, refers to traits that were considered to be connected to the male gender. These traits defined, in the social sphere, what it meant to be a man. They include such characteristics as aggressiveness, assertiveness, an emphasis on logic and rationality, and minimal emotionality. This particular term is especially tricky because the traits deemed masculine were considered to be a product of both biology and upbringing. Mothers, especially, could be criticized for emasculating their sons by parenting in such a way as to squash these typical masculine traits.<sup>70</sup> However, the manner in which these traits expressed themselves was often determined by social status. For example, aggressiveness in lower class individuals might be manifest in bar room brawls while that same trait was expressed in the boardroom or courtroom by individuals of a higher class. To describe the manner in which gentlemen, or men of a higher class, were expected to manifest masculine traits, this study uses the term manly or gentlemanly. There are times when authors discussed in these pages use the term manly to describe some other set of behavioral expectations. In these cases, I outline the ways in which the author's use of language varies from my own. Delineating these terms, though a tricky, inexact categorization, allows for greater understanding about the ways in which race, class, and gender coalesced and vied for prominence within the abolitionist movement in the United States.

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<sup>70</sup> For more on this ideas, see Greven, Philip. *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and Self in Early America*. New York, New York: New American Library, 1977.



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**Vita**  
**Erika A. Kroll McCombs**

EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago, English  
Dissertation Successfully Defended – February 22, 2017  
Dissertation: The Double Bind of Black Manhood: The Language  
of Masculinity in African American Literature, 1800 -1900

M.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, English, 2007

B.A., Washington State University, English, 2004  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
Secondary Teaching Certificate with Endorsements in ESL and  
Bilingual Education

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Terence Whalen - Chair  
John Huntington, David Schaafsma, Natasha Barnes, Peter Coviello - Readers  
Jeff Sellen (Western State Colorado University) – Outside Reader

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

North Carolina Central University Annual Symposium on African-American Literature – Black  
Masculinity in the 21st Century, Durham, North Carolina, November 12, 2015 – Presented paper entitled  
“Reconstruction Politics and the Failure of 19th Century Masculinity”

American Literature Association Conference, San Francisco, May 22 -25, 2008 - Presented paper entitled  
“Civil Disobedience, Civil War and Satyagraha: The Application of Natural Law in Emerson, Thoreau and  
Gandhi” as part of a panel on Emerson and War.

National Conference on Writing Centers as Public Spaces, University of Illinois at Chicago, September 29,  
2006 – Chaired Panel entitled “Writing Center Negotiations: Tutors, Texts, Publics”

Covering New Ground: Explorations in Humanities Research: A Multidisciplinary Graduate Conference,  
University of Illinois at Chicago, March 9, 2006 – Presented paper entitled “Abolition and Pacifism:  
Conflicting Interests in the Quaker Community during the American Civil War”

Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience, Addison TX, February 20-24, 2004 - Co-presented poster  
entitled “Integrating Service-Learning in a First-Year Seminar”

CONFERENCES AND TALKS ORGANIZED

Co-Organizer, with Julie Fiorelli and Mark Bennett, “Peace and War: An Interdisciplinary Graduate  
Student Conference on Culture and Society, Institute for the Humanities, University of Illinois at Chicago,  
June 20-24, 2011

TEACHING AREAS

American Literature, African American Literature, Peace Studies, Composition

RESEARCH INTERESTS

African American Masculinity, 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Literature, Peace Studies, Service Learning in the  
English Classroom,

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT

**Elmhurst College (2015-present)**

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- English 105: Composition I: Locating Self within Elmhurst College: Situated Writing in Both the Local and the Personal
- English 106: Composition II: Victory over Violence: Reading and Writing about Culture and Violence
- English 106: Composition II: Unpacking the Discourse Around Healthcare – Reading and Writing About Current Issues
- English 106: Composition II: Reading and Writing about Race in the 21st Century
- Honors English 106: Honors Composition II: Immigration Nation: Researching the American Cultural Stew (service learning course)

Presentation to English Department Faculty: “Teaching Visual Literacy through the Visual Essay Form in First Year Composition Courses” – November 18, 2015

Presentation to English Department Faculty: “Service Learning and Information Literacy: Designing Writing Projects with Assessment in Mind” – November 9, 2016

Taught an English 105 in conjunction with The Elmhurst Learning and Success Academy (ELSA) program, “a four-year program that offers a full-time, post-secondary educational experience to young adults with developmental disabilities.” This course was composed of both degree seeking students and ELSA participants.

Participated in assessment mapping of information literacy standards for First Year Composition program

### **University of Illinois at Chicago (2006-2015)**

#### Instructor

- English 105: British and American Literature: The Gothic Novel
- English 109: American Literature and Culture
- English 161 Academic Writing II: Violence, Culture and the Individual
- English 161 Academic Writing II: Reading and Writing about Science Fiction
- English 161 Academic Writing II: Medical Ethics and the Body Post-Mortem
- English 160: Academic Writing I: Sweet Home Chicago
- English 243: American Literature to 1900

#### Teaching Assistant

- English 313: Shakespeare (TA for John Huntington)
- English 242: English Literature II: 1660-1900 (TA for Mark Canuel)
- English 243: American Literature (TA for Terence Whalen and Robin Grey)

### **Washington State University**

Freshman Seminar: Freshman Seminar is a 2-credit elective class offered at Washington State University. The focus of Freshman Seminar is to help first-year students enhance critical thinking, research, writing, and presentation skills as well as deal with transition issues faced when entering into the university. In my work with the Freshman Seminar program, I helped to develop and teach a course that combined service learning with an inquiry-based research project.

#### ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE:

ESL Teacher for UIC Executive MBA Program, 2007-2008

Taught beginning ESL and Newcomer course for MBA students visiting from China; helped students with visa paperwork and move to the United States; planned various excursions throughout the Chicagoland area

Facilitator at Washington State University Community Service Learning Center

Worked as a liaison between various community groups and the Community Service Learning Center; planned and facilitated both small and large group community service projects; maintained records of

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student hours, organization contact information and other office records; facilitated service learning break-out sessions and debriefing discussions

### PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Modern Language Association, American Studies Association, Peace and Justice Studies Association

### LANGUAGES SPOKEN

Fluent Portuguese

Conversational Spanish

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