The Problem and the Promise: Black Life and the Coming of Freedom in Late Nineteenth Century America

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a cultural investigation of the meaning of freedom in America from Emancipation to the early twentieth century. Since 1776, a liberal discourse of rights has framed what freedom means in the national consciousness. Defined as an inalienable right legitimated by an infallible authority, freedom was made the basis upon which subjectivity is recognized, governments are formed, appeals are made, and revolutions retain the allure of transformative possibility. However, this idea of freedom obscures the ways in which problems with legitimacy, authority, and the sociopolitical construction of subjecthood all impact the meaning of being free in America. These problems are most apparent concerning the nation's racial politics. The lives of black Americans have exposed the aporia between the ideal of freedom and the reality of racialized existence. The dissonance between the freedom praised as America's most valued ideal and the experience black Americans lived allows for a way of reading the coming of freedom as problem—as a collection of discrepancies, contradictions, and scenes for the violation and subjection of black people.

In this project, I read emancipation and the passing of the Reconstruction Amendments as narrative and performative events. By doing so, the freedoms extended to black Americans post-Civil War are neither bestowed by law or the radical ideals of Lincoln as emancipator or the Republican Congress, nor do black Americans initiate their own meaning of freedom of their own accord. In this moment of transition, the meaning of freedom was determined by both those in political power and those whose practices sought to negotiate the conditions in which they lived. However, as the meaning of freedom was shaped in this moment, it would be insufficient to address the problems of racial logic that restricted what freedom could mean for not only black Americans but the national body at large.

This project is an attempt to trouble what we know about freedom as it regards emancipation, abolition, citizenship, and enfranchisement. It is a project that criticizes the narrative of victory around freedom in this moment and considers the ways in which the freedom celebrated in a national historical consciousness has been the very source of the problem in determining what it means to be free in America.

To Edith

for leading the way

INTRODUCTION: PECULIAR PROMISES

Between the regimes of slavery and Jim Crow segregation is the period we can qualify as the coming of freedom. This period is, in a sense, the testimony of decency against a history of shame, a moment of reprieve in the long and storied violent exclusion and subjection of black Americans. It is the triumph of good over evil written into a national past where evil was not evil but normal, acceptable, the ordained way of life. The coming of freedom is, usually, the story of the coup de théâtre that was emancipation and the series of radical amendments to the Constitution that wrote into law black Americans did indeed possess rights the white man was bound to respect. It is the victory of liberty over slavery, of the modern over the feudal, and of human rights over racial prejudice—that is, at least for a moment. What interests me however, are not the achievements of the period but the incongruities, those things unusual to freedom's arrival, those accounts that could not be managed into the narrative of victory and celebration. The coming of freedom is a curious affair. Situated between what is described as the peculiar institution and the strange career of Jim Crow, one wonders to what extent does such a context affect the freedom arriving in this moment? What happened to all the peculiarity preceding freedom's arrival? And at what point did the strangeness characterizing Jim Crow begin to congeal? From wartime emancipation policy to the effectively hollow Civil Rights Act of 1875, the coming of freedom did not provide the revolutionary break that could disrupt the ideological continuity between slavery and the anti-black violence and discrimination of Jim Crow. In part, this is why the radical agenda of Reconstruction's idealism could not be sustained and was doomed to fail; this is why the period of legislative freedom victories for black Americans could be followed by—and in many places, exist simultaneously with—the advent of the nadir in American race relations. As such, reading the coming of freedom necessitates a reading of the ways the peculiar, the strange, the illogic of antiblack reason not only persist but also define the wartime and postwar successes. My interest in such a reading is to neither diminish the value of these achievements nor challenge their legitimacy or significance. Rather, it is to claim that the freedom celebrated with the advent of emancipation, abolition, citizenship, and enfranchisement is no less strange than the institutions of slavery before it and Jim Crow segregation after it.

Central to understanding the significance of the coming of freedom is understanding it as a moment of transition, particularly as it concerned the making and remaking of black subjectivity. This became a matter of Congressional debate early into the Civil War over whether to classify slaves as property or persons—that is, whether slaves are property to be forfeited by the Confederacy and gained for Union service or whether they are considered human being, to which they would now be declared free.[1] Emancipation and Union victory paved the way for the destruction of slavery but abolition presented its own set of challenges. In theory, there were no more slaves, no more masters. In its wake, a new black subject would be constructed: the freedman. But 'freedman' is different from

freeman and different from free man and free woman. The term 'freedman' is a passive construction; the subject is displaced as the actor initiating freedom and, instead, undergoes the action of freedom. To be freed is to be liberated by another's hand and, as a result, what black Americans experienced was not a freedom of their own making but a freedom of concessions, allotments, surveillance, and control. In this remaking of black subjectivity, the end of slavery did not mean the end of subjection. Every iteration of 'freedman' is an iteration of black dependency, even in their nonenslavement. This was the coming of a peculiar freedom, one that brought with it new forms of subjection based on old assumptions about race and gender. This was, according to Booker Washington, the "severe American crucible" through which black Americans must pass. The burden of responsibility was on freed men and women to prove to bigots, prejudiced missionaries, and "unbiased" natural and social scientist alike black people's fitness for inclusion in American society. Every aspect of black life was scrutinized—their work ethic, business acumen, propensity for economic independence, practice of bourgeois values, performance of gender roles, sexuality, entertainment; all things public and private, vocational and domestic—it was all subject to rigid standards of liberalism's righteous individualism and bourgeois cultural values.[2] The coming of freedom was as much a release from bondage as it was the arrival of a new form of confinement.

The significance of this transitory period is wrapped up in the paradoxical nature of the change it brought. Beginning with emancipation, the coming of freedom would mean the destruction of slavery, the reconstitution of free labor, and the emergence of black positions of power (albeit however fraught) as a result of their military participation.[3] On the other hand, the coming of freedom was the natal scene for slavery's afterlife, the recoupment of white supremacy, and the reconfiguration of conditions of black abjection. In a single moment, the coming of freedom brought celebration and consternation, jubilee and despondency. The joys of independence after centuries of bondage were tempered with the sobriety of independence after centuries of the systematic denial of self-sufficiency. This celebratory pause is instructive in that it complicates an easy embrace of what is now unequivocally considered a victory for human rights and race relations in America. The emphasis on the accomplishment of emancipation, abolition, citizenship, and enfranchisement too readily obscures the problems accompanying these very achievements. Arguably, the significance of this period may be better evaluated by reading the ways in which the coming of freedom is more indicative of problem than solution or resolution.

From the outset, the coming of freedom was characterized by the problem of articulation. What exactly was this freedom extended to millions of black people? What would be its parameters? To what extent would this freedom be the same or different from that enjoyed by the white citizenry? The attempts to bring definition to what it would mean for black people in America to no longer be enslaved is, perhaps, one of the central problems that not only undermined the realization of freedom in that moment but has also contributed to a legacy of elusiveness, competing interpretations, and the continued deferment of freedom's fulfillment for black Americans. The Emancipation Proclamation declared slaves held in states in open rebellion against the Union "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." But the constitutional limitations of this emancipation, in addition to being an act of military necessity did not make this declaration of freedom for

black Americans sustainable. Emancipation was a wartime strategy defined in accordance with an antislavery policy that would decimate the Confederacy and carried out in a way that would further specific Union and Republican interests. Black freedom was military collateral and it was unclear what that freedom would mean beyond the war.

The Reconstruction Amendments, in theory, would perform what emancipation could not, bring definition to the nebulousness of the "thenceforward and forever free," and institute provisions for the practice of said freedom. At the conclusion of the war, the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery as it was known. Next, nearly three years afterwards, the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship, with all of its rights, privileges, and immunities to the formerly enslaved, entitling them to due process and equal protection of the law. Then, just shy of two years later, the Fifteenth Amendment extended the right to vote to black men by declaring the denial of the franchise based on race or previous conditions of servitude unconstitutional. Considered collectively, these amendments narrativize the problem of guaranteeing freedom for black Americans and the problem of determining what that freedom should entail. The abolition of slavery legally extended the reach and force of emancipation. But to what degree does this release from slavery equate to the realization of freedom for the formerly enslaved? Or for those black communities who were free prior to the war? What would such a realization look like in practice? The Fourteenth Amendment was proposed by Congress within months of the Thirteenth Amendment's ratification, despite that it took over two years for it to be ratified. Citizenship was just as much a response to an incompletely conceived freedom than it was an achievement in its own right. That abolition let loose millions of black people from bondage was insufficient because it could not protect against the systematic infringement and violent denial of the possibility of free black life. Citizenship was an attempt to guarantee black freedom by granting freedmen access to the rights, privileges, and immunities protected by the Constitution. Inclusion into the American citizenry would, ideally, ensure black American human rights with civil protections. In this effort to protect black freedom, the Fourteenth Amendment also was an attempt to rearticulate what it means to be black and free. Freedom went from not being enslaved to having access to civil rights. Freedom meant naming and acknowledging freedmen as American; it meant being included as part of the same political and civil body. This freedom placed black Americans under the same law as any other American, making them equal legal subjects and entitling them to the law's equal protection. Under the law, freedom required equality. But, what was acknowledged under the law was not acknowledged in the hearts of men. The Fifteenth Amendment did not further define or expand the meaning of freedom much.[4] The further protection it intended to provide was about upholding an equal exercise of citizenship rights. However, as DuBois would critique in "Of the Dawn of Freedom," full male suffrage was not to emphasize black American equality but to constitutionally extend the rights black Americans would need to now fend for themselves postslavery.[5]

On one hand, the Reconstruction Amendments brought further definition to what it means to be free in America and to whom this freedom would apply. Together with emancipation, these amendments, in effect, perform a nineteenth century remaking of freedom. These political and legal acts sought to articulate a freedom that did not require slavery. For the first time in national history, freedom would have to be defined outside of the usual liberty/bondage and master/slave dyads, outside of the security black

enslavement provided white life, liberties, and pursuits. On the other hand, the Reconstruction Amendments tell the story of confusion, of a governmental scramble to reconcile the liberal idealism of rights discourse with the peculiarity of American race relations. The amendments were repeatedly insufficient in articulating a freedom that could be sustained and practiced by black Americans because they failed to figure out how to address the problem of racial prejudice. Considered collectively, emancipation, citizenship, gestures toward equality, even access to political power were ways of conferring a version of freedom that did not contend with the very problem that animated slavery and now, slavery's afterlife. This would be a newly defined freedom that allowed for the continued existence of the soul life of the very system of bondage it set out to dismantle. This is what makes the coming of freedom peculiar. Not only does the problem of race persist, this redefined freedom is incapable of escaping and—as the demise of Reconstruction would make abundantly clear—is designed to coexist with the problem it did not and would not address.

I want to focus now on the moment of emancipation specifically. My interest here remains the same—it is in that which is strange about emancipation, in what makes it peculiar, and in the problems accompanying emancipation. There are multiple approaches to reading the events of emancipation, although much of the scholarship can be loosely grouped into two very general categories. The first would be to read emancipation as political act by way of the Proclamation. This, in large part, is a political history of emancipation, studying the stages of its development from military contraband policies, Lincoln's executive dilemmas and personal turmoils in declaring emancipation, the constitutionality of the Proclamation, the letter of the text, the intent of the text, and the legacy of the Proclamation among the other milestone documents in American history.[6] It is a history that wrestles with what would colloquially be called the facts of emancipation: why it was, what it was, what it did, what it did not do. The second would be to read emancipation as social phenomenon by way of the interpretive uptake of the Proclamation. Here, the emphasis is on studying the play in emancipation's meaning: the dissonance between the letter and spirit of the Proclamation, the means by which the news travelled, the ways in which the message changed as it travelled, the race-based conflicts (both internal and physical) in the North and behind Union lines, black uptake of emancipation's intervention, the means by which enslaved blacks precipitated emancipation policy, the forms of agency black Americans exercised as a result of emancipation policies, and the challenges black Americans faced because of emancipation.[7] This is the history of emancipation "from the bottom up," of the meanings that could not be contained within the Proclamation's parameters, and of the implications of its impact. Notwithstanding the tensions, debates, and criticisms both within and between methodological approaches, the history of emancipation yet, generally, reproduces a narrative of emancipation secured as a victory for freedom. To read emancipation from the angle of the peculiar is to look for that which accompanies the facts and that which is able to coexist with the victorious. It is to uncover the problems the solutions invite and draw out the experiences that do not corroborate with the narrative of the freedom victory.

The narrative of freedom victory is perhaps the most intriguing thing about emancipation. Within this there is the implicit claim that equates emancipation to freedom and that names emancipation as victory against slavery, racial prejudice, or whatever

would be the contextually relevant evil. For the purposes of this introduction, I am interested in considering the extent to which what we know about emancipation is known by way of narrative. This is significant because it elevates emancipation from the finite text of the Proclamation and congressional policies to fabula, a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. And, the manner in which this fabula is presented—in this case, according to a drama wherein emancipation emerges victorious—in turn elevates a fabula to a story.[8] The stories of emancipation are, perhaps, the means by which we can contest the dominant historical narrative about emancipation fixed in American historical and cultural imagination. It is the story told about emancipation that causes us to revise the facts and rewrite the history.[9] Secondly, approaching historical moments as narrative events emphasize the relationship between actors and events, allowing for a way of reading the not always straightforward relationships between actors and actions, events and actors, and among a series of events.[10] Consequently, to analyze the story of emancipation requires rejecting the idea of its singularity and understanding it as a series of events created by multiple actors and experienced in various different ways. For example, the story of the political process leading Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation often centers around debates over matters of constitutionality, military strategy and timing, and the antislavery origins of the Civil War, with the critical actors being a radical Republican Congress and their legislation on confiscation; Union generals and field officers like General David Hunter and General Benjamin Butler carrying out immediate, on-the-ground military emancipation policies; and, of course, Lincoln himself, his personal stance against slavery, his political stance against federal interference with slavery where it existed, and his reserved, calculated character. These events, however, cannot be considered independent of understanding enslaved blacks as actors whose actions precipitated military and executive emancipation policies and who understood the war as an instrument of emancipation rather than emancipation being an instrument in a war for national unity. Narratives allow for a way of reading events such that no thing simply happens; freedom does not merely arrive. Actors create and experience events, and events implicate actors, influencing and determining their actions. Thirdly, narratives often contain or can be read as containing what DuBois describes as the "tangle of thought and afterthought."[11] Behind every thought of emancipation—behind the story of triumph, behind the glory—lurks an afterthought hidden in plain sight. Narratives often betray this afterthought, revealing the feeling that haunts the idea and the experiences in excess of the thought.

Finally, I am interested in narrative accounts that tell a different story of emancipation. These are stories of strangeness, of emancipation's afterthought, of those events constitutive of emancipation that threaten to undermine the very hope of emancipation itself. In many ways, these narratives work to develop a particular counterhistory of emancipation.[12] By reading these narratives as counterhistory, the goal is not to overturn what we know of emancipation and establish an alternative history nor is it question the intervention of emancipation nor discredit the narrative of it as a victory for freedom in America. Rather, what I am after are contradictory interdependencies—the points of tension, the irreconcilables that are both disruptive to and part and parcel of the story of emancipation and its ideal. To read these narratives as counterhistory is an attempt to point out what is difficult to describe about emancipation and what exceeds its

articulation; it is to read for the experience, the feeling of and about emancipation in excess of the thought of emancipation. My goal is not to offer anything new, per se, about emancipation. All of this is already there, entangled in the story of emancipation as the coming of freedom. I simply want to feature this entanglement, to highlight the peculiarity of this freedom through the narrative accounts of those who have experienced the problem of its intervention.

On August 25, 1864, Annie Davis, who, at the time, was held in slavery in Belair, Maryland, penned a letter to the chief executive of the United States government and the commander-in-chief of the Union Army, Abraham Lincoln. She wrote, "Mr president It is my Desire to be free. to go to see my people on the eastern shore. my mistress wont let me you will please let me know if we are free. and what i can do. I write to you for advice. please send me word this week. or as soon as possible and oblidge. Annie Davis."[13] The letter is straightforward. Davis is direct and gets to the point, writing with the concision of urgency, perhaps even the brevity of haste. And yet, Davis' letter is far from simple. Part grievance, part appeal, part inquiry, part entreaty, Davis writes of a complicated emancipation. She raises the more technical concerns, such as where was emancipation in effect and to whom did it apply, and she provides insight into the more experiential and corporeal concerns of what it means for her as a black woman to live post-emancipation and pre-abolition. There is a particular story Davis tells about emancipation through her letter. Hers is a story of dissonance—of conflict and irresolution, of the fungibility of emancipation and antislavery at the expense of black freedom, of the limitations of political power to free the slaves. Of the three primary actors in Davis' letter (Davis, her mistress, and Lincoln), each have a different understanding of emancipation policy and, as a result, each interpret differently what emancipation might mean for Davis' freedom. What Davis represents in her letter is an emancipation still in process; it is a partial and incomplete event, confirming neither the demise of slavery nor the arrival of freedom.

Reading the dissonance characterizing emancipation that Davis writes into her letter requires first suspending the historical harmonies constructing our contemporary imagination of emancipation. It makes sense for the story of emancipation to be a story of dissonance when—as is the case—Lincoln's 1863 Proclamation has become the metonym for a much longer and larger emancipation project. This metonym functions on three levels. Firstly, it collapses a sequence of dozens of events into a single act, transforming the product of what Ira Berlin describes as the long political process already nearly 100 years in operation by the time of the Civil War into the product of Lincoln's 100 days strategy experiment.[14] Secondly, following Berlin's argument, to understand emancipation requires understanding the degree to which the legal suits of antebellum free black Americans, the military efforts of slaves fighting for their freedmen America's early wars, the insurrectionary efforts of those seeking an end to their enslavement, and the opportunism of those who sought a less oppressive life comprise the sequence of events that make emancipation possible in 1863 just as much—if not more so than—the events of abolition's frustrated movement and the political interests in the contaminant of slavery. To read the Proclamation as emancipation permits the elision of black Americans as actors and the history of their actions, and make it plausible to memorialize a problematically hesitant

and wavering Lincoln as the author of the emancipation project in America. Thirdly, the metonym of the Emancipation Proclamation obscures the actual contribution of the ordinance, allowing it to accrue a radical social capital beyond what Lincoln was willing to invest.[15] Between what emancipation would come to mean in the American imagination and what the language of the Proclamation stipulated exists a discrepancy, a problem Davis saw as worth whatever the risk it may have been to send correspondence to Lincoln himself.[16]

Since Davis' letter was reproduced in 1985 with the Freedom and Southern Society Project's *Freedom: The Destruction of Slavery*, it has found itself in multiple scholarly works, educational curriculums, and quoted on number blog sites.[17] Davis' question about the confusion around emancipation policy is what is often highlighted, and no record of any reply her letter has provided the occasion for historians and bloggers alike to forge a response from Lincoln simply stating, "no." Davis, enslaved in Maryland, would remain enslaved as Maryland was a border state and, in exchange for its loyalty to the Union, the "thenceforward, and forever free" would not apply to those enslaved therein. As a question of the Proclamation's terms, emancipation was a geopolitical project, allowing for a specific type of conditional freedom. Everything else about Davis and her letter is lost. When Martha S. Jones writes of Annie Davis, she presents her as more than a confused inquirer about the Proclamation's parameters.[18] For Jones, Davis' letter is a demonstration of the legal consciousness enslaved blacks possessed. Davis, as were many others, was well aware of the sequence of events that preceded the Proclamation and to which Lincoln's act served as a rejoinder. The two Confiscation Acts passed by Congress in 1861 and 1862 allowed for the seizure of any property that may abet Confederate treason against the Union, including slaves, and declared the freedom of any slaves held by those in rebellion against the United States government wherever Union forces gained control.[19] The abolition of slavery in Washington D.C.—although it was by way of compensated emancipation—in 1862 also encouraged black flight, especially from the neighboring border states. Not only that, this legislation, in addition to the encouragement and enlistment of black Americans into the Union Army after the Proclamation, sent the message that the Civil War was a battle against slavery and for freedom. From this position, with the awareness that slavery was already under siege, Davis' inquiry about her status has less to do with the technicalities of the Proclamation's provisions and is more concerned about the progression of the government-sanctioned emancipatory process. At the point of Davis' letter, the Proclamation had been in effect already for twenty months. To make the Proclamation metonym for emancipation is to miss the larger narrative of emancipation about which Davis takes Lincoln to task.

The selective application of the Proclamation is but the beginning of the problem Davis' letter brings up about emancipation. Davis' inquiry about her status is an attempt to reconcile her continued enslavement with the evolving emancipatory policies coming out of Washington since the outbreak of the war. And if, as some historians argue, emancipation policy was designed with the expectation that enslaved blacks would run for their freedom, then at what point does emancipation require strict adherence to the letter of the law and at what point does it allow for interpretive play?[20] The attention Davis gives to emancipation policy is not only concerning its inconsistency but also its incongruence with the narrative of emancipation as a victory for freedom. Davis' enslavement in

Maryland is more than a quick answer to her question about her freedom. Her enslavement in Maryland positions her to question emancipation policy and its efficacy in ways that, perhaps, cannot be done in the non-slaveholding states in the North or the slaveholding states in the confederate South.

The story of the tension between the longer process of emancipation, the event of the Proclamation, and the wartime legislation making the Civil War a war against slavery surfacing in Davis' letter is indicative of another nuance. Perhaps this difference was the frustration that prompted Davis to write. Perhaps this was the discrepancy about which Davis wanted to ask but did not, that she should have asked but would not. Maryland was proof of the dissonance between the antislavery effort and the emancipation project. What makes reading the coming of freedom through emancipation policy peculiar is not its selective application but its inability to demonstrate a commitment to black American freedom. This is not to discount the political and martial strategies to retain Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri in the Union and that without those state, there might have been a different outcome in the war. But it is precisely this claim about the necessity of the border states that supports, all the more, the distinction between abolition and emancipation. The compromise to allow slavery in strategic states in exchange for loyalty demonstrates that the effort to emancipate black Americans held in bondage was separate from and subordinate to the effort to destroy slavery, particularly in the Confederacy. This does not foreclose the influence of Republicans like Lyman Trumbull, who proposed a confiscation bill that named enslaved blacks as persons and not property, and distinguished confiscation from immediate emancipation.[21] However, Republican resistance to Trumbull's proposal and Lincoln's reticence to use confiscation policy as emancipation policy indicates a greater preoccupation with the institution of slavery itself than with the bondage and freedom of black Americans.

None of this is new information in the history of Civil War scholarship. The "real question" Republicans were concerned with was "What is to be done with slavery?"[22] And for all that thought generated, its afterthought asked another question, "What is to be done with the Negro?" The destruction of slavery was one thing, the emancipation of the enslaved held in bondage is another thing. This, the difference between thought and afterthought, that which distinguishes the "real question" from the other question, is the problem the goes unaddressed in the narrative of emancipation. It is possible to be radical about the abolition of slavery and yet disregard the life of those yet enslaved. This is Annie Davis' story and her letter can be read as her attempt to do something about it.

The contribution of Davis' letter begins with the fact of its existence. Her letter intervenes in emancipation policy by disrupting the two-way negotiation between antislavery politicians and slaveholders. The terms of emancipation policy—and, this is considering all wartime congressional legislation and executive acts—do not address black Americans.[23] The battle against slavery taking place in Washington was allowed to be a separate concern from the lives and livelihood of black Americans because its primary audience, both imagined and real, were slaveholders, those in rebellion against the Union and those who pledged a fragile loyalty to the Union. When Davis writes, "Mr president It is my Desire to be free. to go to see my people on the eastern shore. my mistress wont let me you will please let me know if we are free. and what i can do. I write to you for advice," she is attempting to open a direct line of communication with Lincoln in order to

appeal her mistress's verdict. In the process, Davis not only draws attention to emancipation's problem of audience, she also inserts herself in the dialogue about her freedom. Her letter is not a demonstration of uncertainty, as it is commonly read; rather, it is a performance of her conviction. Davis positions herself as a principal actor in the emancipation project, aligning herself against her mistress and seeking collaboration with Lincoln in the fight for her freedom.

The backstory to Davis' letter is of interest here, which she writes in as a previous conversation between her and her mistress. It could have been a request to see family; or an inquiry about her status; or what it meant that federal camps populated Harford County; or that thirty miles away, Baltimore was a Union stronghold; or about the implications of impending Union victory. Whatever the content of their exchange, it would be the mistress's reading of emancipation—or rather, her understanding of how emancipation affects her as a slaveholder in Maryland—that would prevail. This was the nature of wartime emancipation politics: the status of the enslaved depended on the political allegiance of the enslaver. Legally, emancipation was structured in such a way that black eligibility for freedom was determined by white slaveholders. If emancipation is to represent the beginning of the government-sponsored coming of freedom for black Americans, then black Americans did not own the freedom intended for them.

In the southern slaveholding states, the coming of freedom was no less peculiar. On March 22, 1873, Nancy Johnson, a woman living in Canoochie Creek, Liberty County, Georgia testified before the Southern Claims Commission. Her testimony was a witness account on behalf of her husband Boson Johnson, who filed a claim for $514.50 in loss and damages at the hands of Union soldiers during the Civil War. In January 1865, a troop estimated to be in the thousands traveled through the area, took control of Johnson's then master David Bagg's plantation, and encamped nearby for two days. During that time, the soldiers raided the property, taking food, clothes, livestock, and whatever other valuables they found worth taking. The raid affected Nancy and Boson as well, as the soldiers seized the food, clothing, and other provisions the Johnsons worked to amass as their own property. Nancy Johnson's testimony before the commission was not only a witness account of what was confiscated by federal officers. Her testimony was a story of events, a narrative of her and her husband's loyalty to the Union even at the risk of his life, of repeated support of the Union effort, and even of compassion on the soldiers raiding their property. The Southern Claims Commission's qualifications were strict: a claimant need to be able to document their ownership of the disputed goods and furnish solid proof of their loyalty to the Union throughout the entire war. These, especially the proof of ownership, were difficult for black applicants to prove and the commission treated black deponents with a high degree of skepticism. Perhaps, Nancy Johnson hoped to do more than to simply recount of the events of the raid; perhaps she, on purpose, sought to construct a story that would walk the line between demonstrating Union loyalty and acting in the best interest of her and her family.[24] Alternatively, Johnson's testimony of loyalty and loss is also a testimony of her experience of emancipation. As she mentions in her account, she gained her freedom when the federal troops arrived at Bagg's plantation. Johnson presents an interesting juxtaposition between the coming of freedom and the raid and seizure of her

property. The experience she shares for the purpose of recompense is also an experience to consider what emancipation wrought for her and her family.

Nancy Johnson's story of emancipation is a story of loss. In her two part deposition, she discusses the burdens of life prior to the war, because of the war, and after the war, then responds to specific questions about the owned goods in question and the extent to which she witnessed their confiscation.[25] The claim listed one mare, 625 pounds bacon, 60 pounds lard, twelve bushels corn, eight bushels rice, seven meat hogs, eleven stock hogs, and 25 chickens among the stolen property, estimated at $514.50, of which the Johnsons were awarded $155 for compensation. Such claims were not uncommon, particularly throughout Georgia lowcountry, as General Sherman's unit marched and plundered from Atlanta to Savannah to Charleston, marauding and burning plantations and farms as they went. But for the cost of her loss, Johnson gained her freedom.

When freedom arrived for Johnson, it was a peculiar freedom, one that would maintain the discriminatory and hierarchical reason that defined race relations under slavery. Twice in her testimony, Johnson describes how the federal troops justified their raid and her loss of her property. She says, "They said that they didn't believe what I had belonged to me & I told them that I would swear that it belonged to me. I had tried to hide things" and again, "This property all belonged to me and my husband. None of it belonged to Mr. Baggs I swore to the men so, but they wouldn't believe I could have such things. […] It didn't look like a Yankee person would be so mean. But they said if they didn't take them the whites here would & they did take some of my things from their camps after they left." Johnson's repetition, that she would mention the troops disbelief in her ownership twice, is a necessary emphasis when having to prove ownership of said possessions with little to no documentation for the claims commission. It also highlights a continuity in racial thought that emancipation would fail to disrupt. The material loss Johnson experienced was different from the seizure of property David Baggs experienced. Johnson held no allegiance to the Confederacy; she even harbored and assisted a Union soldier escaping confederate capture (whom she recognized and spoke with during the raid). The grounds for her loss were not political. What the soldiers could not believe about the Johnsons was that it was possible for them to own what they did while being enslaved. And even still, how does one discern what is eligible to be confiscated? If Johnson, as the property of Baggs, owns property, is it all subject to seizure for federal use? The question here is a matter of black humanity and the extent to which black Americans possessed rights to be recognized and protected. Johnson's loss at the hands of the Union marauders reads as more congruent with the capture and appropriation of black people's goods and services, of their labor and their labor's fruits, than with confiscation policy. Yet, emancipation was an event for Johnson, in the sense that it created a change in her status with Mr. Baggs. However, when freedom arrived for Johnson, it did so by way of infringement and violation, conditions all too familiar to that of enslavement.

The brand of freedom arriving for Johnson in January of 1865, descends from a tradition of manumission, which granted freedom to the enslaved without disrupting the order of slavery.[26] The release of black people from bondage in America has long been a matter of contractual exchange because the freedom gained by blacks would diminish the profits of slaveholders. In this tradition, freedom always exacts payment. This is the economic logic of compensated emancipation and it is also the basis for the cultural

assumptions structuring racialized power relations that would survive the destruction of slavery. As Johnson's narrative attests, this assumptive understanding of a race, property, freedom, payment nexus informed military emancipation as well, especially considering that it operated, for the most part, through discretionary confiscation. If the coming of freedom functioned according to power relations structured by this racial logic, then it is necessary to ask questions not only of this logic but also of freedom itself, particularly as it concerns race in America. It is a curious thing that the notion of freedom gains for black Americans is often met (perhaps contested would be more accurate) in the national imagination with some discourse of white loss for which there needs to be some racial indemnification. This peculiar dialectic of black advancement as white loss has its roots in the social order of slavery, which placed value on black life as white property. The loss is not against slaveholders only but against whiteness and all who benefited from it. For black Americans to be free, to be citizen, to be in political power, to possess economic power, to be equal are all constructed not only as threat but as loss, as infringement on the profit of whiteness or, on what has been described as social and cultural capital amassed from the wages of whiteness.[27] Regardless if scholars read the Civil War as having antislavery origins or not, the policy that came out of Washington against slavery was never the same as the battle for black liberation from slavery. Wartime emancipation policy approached freedom for black Americans according to white loss and Union gain. Slaves—although acknowledged as persons rather than property—were not the victims in this war against slavery; the victim was the staunch American commitment to the pursuit and protection of private property rights. Compensation for the forced labor of enslaved black Americans was never a serious issue in Washington but compensation for slaveholders remained a consideration until 1865. Freedom would always exact a price from black Americans and the cost of this freedom would finance the fear of white loss. When the Union soldiers raided David Baggs' plantation, that was wartime confiscation at work; they paid themselves forward from the rebels' losses. When the Union soldiers seized the Johnsons' property, it did not register as black loss; they could not even believe the Johnsons could own such things. But they were sure of this: if they, the Union soldiers did not commandeer the Johnsons' property, then other white people will. Simply put, this was the cost of freedom.

It is worth considering, also, the more intangible ways the solution of emancipation invited problems for black Americans. For example, that military emancipation policy was in effect only in the South created significant ramifications for freed black Southerners. After emancipation in the form of federal troops came and left plantation grounds, if freed blacks did not leave and travel with the Union camp, they were subject to the whims of their former slaveowners or the retaliatory violence of local Confederate sympathizers. As Johnson testifies, her loss was not only material. As a result of the raid on Baggs' plantation, Johnson was separated from two of her children. Of her son Henry, she says, "My boy was sent out to the swamp to watch the wagons of provisions & the soldiers took the wagons & the boy, & I never saw him anymore. He was 14 yrs. old. I could have got the child back but I was afraid my master would kill him; he said that he would & I knew that he would or else make his children do it: he made his sons kill 2 men big tall men like you." That the war placed a burden on enslaved blacks is not an uncommon claim. But the story Johnson tells is not only the burden of war but also the cost of freedom. The coming of

emancipation that January required that Johnson choose the successful confiscation of Baggs' wagons and provisions over the life of her son.

Concerning her daughter, Johnson says, "I told one of the officers that we would starve & they said no that we would get it all back again, come & go along with us; but I wouldn't go because the old man had my youngest child hid away in Tatnal Co: he took her away because she knew where the gold was hid & he didn't want her to tell." The presence of federal troops taking control of confederate lands was the pronouncement of emancipation to those yet enslaved. What happens after that is something different; proceeding from the freedom bestowed enslaved blacks is an effort to secure what Lincoln calls in the Proclamation "their actual freedom."[28] The promise of "get[ting] it all back again" is that old American promise, the right to the pursuit of property, the cornerstone of, perchance, the "actual" American independence. Apparently, this is the assumptive expectation Lincoln and other conservative Republicans banked their antislavery policy on: freedom for black Americans would come by way of enlisting their services in either the federal army or in Union camps—or, "get it all back again" and "come and go along with us."[29] But, as Johnson's narrative reveals, emancipation was not victorious nor did it indicate a break from the hold of slavery. Emancipation presented the occasion, yet again, for Johnson to weigh the cost of her freedom against the life of her child. The pursuit of freedom, in the form of Johnson leaving the plantation with the Union camp would cost the loss of her daughter, hidden away by Baggs in another county as security for his gold. What Johnson describes is one of the central problems of emancipation for black Americans. As an event, emancipation did mark the transition from one state to another. However, when the enslaved became the freed, they transitioned from one state of subjection to another. Even after emancipation, for the sake of her daughter, Johnson was yet bound to the Baggs—but not as it was before. The treatment Johnson received from Mrs. Baggs was indicative of the bitterness, resentment, and vengeance that characterized ex-confederate and confederate sympathizers treatment of freed men and women throughout the postwar South.

The loss that Nancy Johnson faced, both material and immaterial, tells of the story of a difficult emancipation, one that seems to be more interested in the antislavery strategies of war than in the liberation of black Americans. To trouble emancipation policy even further, Johnson's testimony of life after the raid accentuates a strangely sardonic element of the Proclamation. After stating that all persons held as slaves in the designated states are free and that the government will recognize and maintain this freedom, Lincoln writes, "And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages."[30] If the thought of the Proclamation is to declare freedom for black Americans with the support of the government and, more abstractly, to assert a new national policy of protecting human rights over private property rights, then the afterthought of the Proclamation is an uneasiness about black inclusion in American civil society and a general discomfort about of what black Americans would do once free. Such was the nature of the coming of freedom for black Americans: declaration and distrust, release and regulation. Perhaps it was Lincoln's commitment to colonization policy, or that he did not believe white and black Americans can coexist in civil society but the emancipation policy credited with the destruction of slavery and introducing the

coming of freedom also introduces the immediate restraint and imputation of responsibility on freed black life. It is also somewhat unusual that Lincoln would mention this in the Proclamation, especially because it would be in effect only in the South. To recommend this code of conduct for freed blacks only (again, the burden of responsibility falls on them) after emancipation releases them into a hostile Southern environment is both unrealistic and contextually inconsiderate. With whom, or rather for whom, would freed men and women labor faithfully? Where would freed men and women find "reasonable" wages? What would qualify as "reasonable?" In Johnson's case, upon her return to her house on the Baggs property, the animosity her former mistress held toward her created a working environment and relationship that did not allow for faithful labor and that left Johnson "hard up to live," struggling to manage in ways she did not prior to emancipation.

Johnson's is a story that complicates the way in which we think of emancipation as victory or solution. This is not to suggest the Johnsons were better off without emancipation. Far from it. Johnson is clear she was "served mighty mean" before freedom came in the form of the Union army. Rather, it is to highlight, as Johnson does in her testimony, that the arrival of freedom invited a series of problems. Emancipation created a drastic change in living conditions for the Johnsons. They lost all they had amassed over the years despite their condition of enslavement. Eight years afterwards, standing before the Southern Claims Commission, they have been unable to gain what they have lost.

These are but two accounts of many that tell the story of emancipation, the great coming of freedom. But Annie Davis and Nancy Johnson do not give us revolution; they tell neither of vanquishing slavery nor celebrating freedom as a basic human right. Their narratives speak of family and plight, of agency and loss, of resolve and petition. Admittedly, I do not believe these accounts will debunk the dominant narrative of emancipation nor have I aimed for them to do so. My hope, though, is that they will highlight the incongruities about emancipation and call out the dissonances of the easy history where the destruction of slavery and the achievement of black freedom are written on the same page in the textbook of America's imagined past. Part of the reason for this is because what made slavery such a peculiar institution was not extinguished at the moment of slavery's demise. This is the soul life that animated slavery and that would manage Jim Crow's strange career. It is that which informs legislation but cannot be legislated. It is that which remains unspoken, the racial reason regulating the social order of things. And, without question, it has carried over into the arrival of freedom. By reading narratives that call out that which is odd, peculiar, or strange about emancipation, it is possible to identify the limitations of the freedom granted and proven insufficient, and refuse conscription into a form of freedom that does not privilege but further subjects black life. It is worth mentioning, though, that Davis and Johnson yet invested in the coming of freedom. They both had an understanding of political power and petitioned to that power in the service of their personal interests. They both acknowledge change; emancipation did create a transition from one state to another. But theirs is a story of emancipation that both confirms and disrupts its dominant narrative, accepts and distrusts its promise, and that is ready both to embrace and to refuse the coming of a freedom yet in process. They tell of an emancipation not so liberating and of a triumph not so victorious.

In Chapter One, I continue to evaluate the coming of freedom through the moment of emancipation, focusing on the Emancipation Proclamation and the circumstances of its uptake throughout the South. I argue that the dissonance between the spirit and the letter of the Proclamation is attributable to the distress the news of emancipation brought to white Southerners and the ways enslaved blacks used methods of alternative literacy to appropriate and disseminate their own interpretations of what emancipation meant. Chapter Two begins with the Compromise of 1877, effectively noting the end of Reconstruction and the period I frame as the arrival of freedom for black Americans. In this chapter I juxtapose discourse around the governmental retreat from the protection of civil and political rights for black Americans with the frequent invocations of American revolutionary era freedom rhetoric as the nation approached its centennial celebration and the possibility of a second civil war in ten years. The peculiarity of the meaning of freedom in America, particularly for black Americans, is featured in this chapter: the force of the Reconstruction Amendments are diminished in the political realm as the matter of black rights is consigned to the realm of social morality; radical Republicans abdicate their commitment to black Americans civil and political liberties because of a general weariness with having to deal with the problems of racial division cause; and black Americans gird themselves for executive and legislative abandonment by imagining black nationalist means to secure their freedom. Chapter Three is a reading of Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery* as a revision on the slave narrative, a manual for black uplift, an autobiographical self-help book, and most importantly, as the textbook for his own brand of pragmatic politics for black Southerners at the turn of the twentieth century. I consider the ways Washington understood Reconstruction as failing black Americans and how he sought to develop a practical politics of freedom that would not fail. In the process, the brand of freedom Washington preached would come at the cost of accommodating social segregation and black second-class citizenship. Lastly, Chapter Four is a close reading of the opening of W.E.B. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk* as a reflection on the failure of the post-Civil War coming of freedom. Here, I consider what it means to think through the coming of freedom as failure and the significance of the problem of racial prejudice to the realization of freedom for black Americans. Collectively, the chapters in this dissertation are the beginning of a study on the strangeness of the meaning of freedom in America, particularly as seen through the experiences of black Americans.

Chapter One

THE MEANING OF EMANCIPATION

The event of emancipation was already underway before President Abraham Lincoln decided to issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862. The Civil War provided the occasion for Congress to involve itself, however tentatively and tangentially, in legislative rearticulations of a freedom messily entangled with race and wartime politics. Despite repeated and adamant professions of the Civil War being a war over states' rights and not about Union interference with Southern slavery, the South's secession and the North's attempts at reunification bring to center stage the main issues of the conflict: independence and freedom, and their inextricable appendages, dependency and slavery. When the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation declared the new governmental policy concerning slavery and freedom, it was already situated within a larger polyphonic governmental voicing of the meaning of freedom, slavery, and race.

Wartime politics imbued the United States government, particularly the executive and legislative branches, with the military authority to redefine slavery, and subsequently, freedom. Historian John Hope Franklin dates the discussion of the constitutional legality of federal emancipation during wartime back to an 1837 debate over contention between federal imposition and state rights concerning slavery. John Quincy Adams argued that during war, all laws governing the institution of slavery were void. The federal government possesses the power to interfere with slavery the same way the commanders of two opposing armies have the power to emancipate all the slaves under their jurisdiction.[31] Prior to the Civil War, the federal government functioned to protect the private property of slaveholders and it was difficult to legally justify a federal abrogation of slavery under governmental duty to protect the rights—in this case, the property rights—of its citizens. However, because the stability of the enslaved as a workforce was the very life support of the South and the means by which the Confederacy could send soldiers to war without losing economic vitality or shifting its major profit industries, the institution of slavery gave the Confederate South considerable advantage in its wartime insurrection. The Civil War allowed the federal government to pivot on federal policy toward slavery, moving from protecting the right to property to attacking slavery as a weapon of warfare. In this way, wartime politics suspended what was normal governmental policy to protect slavery, a policy which effectively maintained the whiteness of American freedom.[32] As the war brought a shift in the South's use of the institution of slavery, it also precipitated a shift in how the federal government understood slavery, the project of emancipation, and the authorized role of the federal government to redefine its policy toward slavery, and subsequently, albeit indirectly, race and freedom.

The matter of emancipation quickly dominated governmental affairs from the outset of the war. The military engaged emancipation and its implications most readily. In May 1861, within a month of the start of the war, General Benjamin Butler harbored—and in effect freed—three runaway enslaved blacks for service use behind Union lines. Three months later, Major General John Frémont proclaimed martial law in Missouri and declared free those enslaved who had been "confiscated" from those who resisted United States

authority. In March 1862, Major General David Hunter, commander of the Department of the South, began issuing certificates of emancipation to the enslaved employed by the Confederacy; declaring free those enslaved on Cockspur Island and at Fort Pulaski in Georgia in April; proclaiming the enslaved free throughout South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida in May 1862. Shortly thereafter, President Lincoln intervened, rescinding Hunter's proclamation on the grounds that Hunter nor any other commander or person is authorized by the United States Government to make a proclamation declaring slaves free in any state.[33] While military leaders had the physical power (read force) to enforce emancipation, they lacked the authorization to emancipate. Acting independently, the military approach did not and could not effectively institute abolition and freedom via enforcement because it lacked the authorized recognition and consent of larger governmental institutional power.

This governmental flirtation with emancipation was not only a preoccupation of the military; Congress, too, was much concerned with the subject since the onset of the war. General Butler's confiscation and employment of runaways resonated with John Quincy Adams' understanding of the federal government's extended capabilities during wartime, precipitating the First Confiscation Act in August 1861. The Confiscation Act declared that any "property" either sold or owned "with the intent to employ or use" in service of insurrection or resistance against the United States government would be confiscated, and that any person held in labor or service and required to take up arms or service in insurrection against the United States government could forfeit their claim to such labor.[34] Such is the logic: if the enslaved are deemed property by the Confederacy, then all property used to support Confederate resistance can be seized. For any person found in rebellion to "employing or using" the enslaved in this way forfeits their claim to the labor contractually expected from their chattel property.[35] Seeing the military benefit in taking the enslaved out from underneath slavery, Congress attempted to dismember the Confederacy's most useful weapon against the Union. 1862 saw the rapid onset of Congressional moves to militarily situate the Union against the pro-slavery rebellion, taking the form of legislative acts to abolish slavery where it could and emancipate the enslaved as confiscated property. In April of 1862, Congress passed a bill abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, a law "long-overdue" to resolve the striking irony of slavery existing in the capital of the United States, the same government against which the pro-slavery Confederates rebelled.[36] In addition to attempting to achieve political congruity in the Union's message, President Lincoln signed this bill into law because it included provisions for compensation to slaveholders for each slave they owned and plans for the colonization of the freedmen in D.C.[37] Shortly thereafter in June of 1862, Congress passed another abolition bill, abolishing slavery in the territories. The President also signed this bill, despite the absence of any measure for compensation. In July, Congress advanced a more aggressive attempt toward emancipation with its Second Confiscation Act, authorizing military officers to seize slave property as they advanced into the Confederacy. This act provided that for any person guilty of treason against the United States, his slaves should be "declared and made free" and that all slaves who take refuge or come under the control of the United States government "shall be deemed captives of war, and shall be forever free of their servitude, not again held as slaves."[38] Also, this act allowed for the Union military to employ as many persons of African descent to suppress Southern insurrection, and alluded to the removal

and colonization of freed blacks. Though trepidatious, Lincoln signed the ambitious act, harboring doubts as to the constitutionality of Congress's goal with the Second Confiscation Act. Also in July, before congressional recess, the anti-slavery Congress concluded its term by passing the militia act, authorizing the Union to receive, use, and employ any man or boy of African descent into military service and by proxy of this service, his mother, wife, and children shall forever thereafter be free.[39]

While governmental angst and public anxiety over emancipation loomed large in the national consciousness, Lincoln sought to remain arm's distance from the military and legislative efforts at emancipation. Harold Holzer's *Emancipating Lincoln* diligently tracks the ways in which Lincoln intentionally obfuscated his position on emancipation in an attempt to retain the support of both the conservative and more progressive contingents of the Union. Amid his best efforts at subterfuge, Lincoln was clear in stating that the power to emancipate is a privilege that only he, as President of the United States, could exercise. Consequently, Lincoln rejected the military's emancipatory endeavors under Generals Frémont and Hunter, and Congress's gestures toward emancipation as precursors to his own policy on emancipation. The military officers' evocation of martial law and Congress's legislative impatience sought to end the war as quickly as possible by exposing and striking at the Confederacy's dependency on black loyalty and black labor. However, intention and fervor aside, Frémont and Hunter did not have the power to emancipate as they saw fit and the constitutionality of Congress's Confiscation Acts were questionable. As questions of constitutional authority, executable power, and imminent revolution in racial policy framed Lincoln's thoughts on emancipation, Lincoln sought to enact emancipation in a way that his governmental interlocutors either could not or failed to consider.

Despite Lincoln's efforts to distinguish his emancipation policy from these military and legislative attempts, the Emancipation Proclamation both engages and is situated within the larger governmental polyphony on issues of war, national unity, and race; humanity versus property; and slavery and freedom. To understand the message of freedom that the Proclamation carries, it must be understood in the context of this governmental discourse on emancipation. On one hand, the Proclamation is a direct executive rejoinder to the military and congressional attempts at emancipation. After a rather anti-climactic rebuff from his cabinet after revealing his initial plans for a proclamation, Lincoln took to a "three-tiered strategy" deliberating how his move would supersede the shortcomings of previous governmental efforts.[40] On the other hand, the Proclamation is an executive articulation of freedom that fundamentally changes governmental approaches to race and freedom. Emancipation immediately altered the focus of the war from reunion to slavery; represented a departure from a general federal support of slavery as the protection of American property rights; and threatened to disrupt existing configurations of race, freedom, and citizenship. Taken together, the Emancipation Proclamation embodies an utterance that participates in a larger dialogue of governmental articulations of freedom, even as it encompasses a multiplicity of political, martial, and social positions beyond preceding governmental actions. In this way, the Proclamation represents much more than a conclusive and culminating executive statement about emancipation. But what makes Lincoln's emancipatory utterance more valuable than its competing contemporary endeavors?[41] The focus for this chapter is on how the Emancipation Proclamation accrued value—both in the discursive moment shaped by the

Civil War and long afterwards—based on the circumstances of its uptake. Accordingly, this chapter is interested in the ways in which the circulation and uptake of the news of Lincoln's Proclamation precipitated a cultural event of emancipation that far exceeded the parameters of a political document with social and cultural implications.

To extend emancipation from edict to event is to consider the ways in which the constitution of emancipation's meaning remained in progress beyond Lincoln's semantic intentions and well after the publishing of the Proclamation's final draft.[42] Of particular interest here is that as the military and reporting outlets disseminated the Proclamation, news of emancipation circulating amongst the enslaved functioned to change the parameters of what emancipation entailed and articulate new and revised understandings of freedom based on the pragmatic experiences of everyday life. Circulation traversed multiple social spaces through military command, journalistic reporting, martial manumission, and word of mouth communication, including rumor. When Lincoln officially announced the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862, he had 15,000 copies disseminated among Union forces to ensure the new wartime policy concerning slavery and race was clear. Northern, Southern, and international journalists and newspapers picked up the news of emancipation and commented on the larger social and political implications the Proclamation. Federal forces advancing into the South declared enslaved blacks free as they came across plantations, or they pressured slaveholders under threat of violence to manumit those whom they subjected under slavery. Beyond these, the messages of newspapers and traveling Union armies extended beyond their physical presence through word of mouth communication. As news of the proclamation spread verbally, it negotiated complex networks of distinct yet interrelated racial, spatial, and caste/status positionalities. Through this communicative channel, the signification of emancipation escaped and exceeded its physical entextualization and its embodied representation. In other words, as news of emancipation circulated via word of mouth, the coming of emancipation was no longer limited to the reach of the written word or the arrival of the Union officer.

Particularly, this chapter's interest in word of mouth communication is with the ways in which enslaved blacks who did not or could not read passed along the news of coming emancipation. Rapidly traveling through the channels of rumor and paraphrased speech, that which Steven Hanh calls "the stuff of the slaves' 'politics,'" the meaning of emancipation underwent rather radical revision as it was reappropriated according to how both blacks and whites understood the major players in this wartime drama and what they imagined freedom and the end of slavery to mean. For Hahn, despite the enslaved being unable to advance political demands or represent themselves as political actors because they stood outside of formal politics, they "instead projected a terrain of struggle in which their aspirations could be advanced and in which they might imagine powerful allies."[43] Actors indeed, the enslaved circulating the news of emancipation broadened the meaning of what the Proclamation signified so much so that they were, in effect, co-constructors of the meaning of emancipation as much as Lincoln and the Proclamation's legislative antecedents. The Emancipation Proclamation as document remained limited in its reach and its applicable significance until it circulated via word of mouth. This circulation extended the proclamation beyond mere text, spreading as the New York Times described

as a "far more rapid and secret diffusing of intelligence and news throughout the plantations than was ever dreamed of in the North."[44] In this way, emancipation is more of a complex discursive event than a mere declaration in that emancipation actually "happened" as black interlocutors made use of the news to pragmatically redefine emancipation and translate it into physical and concrete practices.

The dissemination of emancipation through word of mouth occurs along circuits of communication that traverse multiple registers of literacy and illiteracy, sites of urbanity and rurality, constructed statuses of master and slave, and ontological premises of whiteness and blackness. The issue of literacy was a central node where the meaning of emancipation converged how the information about emancipation traveled. But literacy in this sense is not dependent solely on reading and comprehension. In fact, it is illiteracy in this sense (i.e. being conditionally unable to read the Proclamation and reports of emancipation) that layers functional significance onto the meaning of emancipation. Challenges to reading and comprehending textual reports of emancipation require that circulation occur in creative and adaptive ways, which operatively develops an alternative kind of literacy, or a literacy peculiar to the regulated conditions of their social space. This literacy was the backbone for a language of "secret signs," with its own mechanics and vocabulary that allowed the enslaved to ascertain critical information and communicate it broadly and rapidly, sometimes even in the presence of their slaveholders.[45] Arguably, as news of emancipation circulated, its cultural significance as a potentially revolutionary event is discerned and taken up by the literacy of the circumstantially illiterate.

Looking at this "taking up," or what Anne Freadman would describe as uptake, can be helpful in thinking through how this alternative literacy functions and what makes word of mouth circulation so transformative to the meaning and significance of emancipation. Freadman builds off of J.L. Austin's notion of uptake, using the term "to name the bidirectional relation that holds between […] a text and […] its 'interpretant.'" She goes on to say, "the text is contrived to secure a certain class of uptakes, and the interpretant […] confirms its generic status by conforming itself to this contrivance."[46] In the Austinian vein of doing things with words, a text—and in this case, the Emancipation Proclamation—is intended to do something, to accomplish a particular social activity. This activity however, is based on whether or not people accept and/or carry out what the text seeks to do. In this way, texts contrive a particular kind of use, as a "request" of sorts, and the interpretant confirms the legitimacy and authority of the text by "taking it as" an invitation. As such, all texts, no matter its position of authority—even as executive order—require uptake in order to perform its social action.

With the invitation for a bidirectional relation in place, uptake works in this way: the interpretant has the power to either confirm the status of the contriving text, or to not confirm it, thereby modifying the status of the text by taking as its object of engagement something other than the contrived request. Uptake, then, provides a framework to think through the ways in which emancipation, as a particular governmental position on freedom, is informed and modified by the Proclamation's interpretants, by those who yet enslaved. Building on this, Freadman's understanding of uptake departs from Austin's on two fronts: one, that uptakes have long, intertextual memories that inform what objects it "takes"; and two, that an uptake on purpose chooses the object it selects, defines, and represents. Freadman says, "Uptake is first the taking of an object; it is not the causation of

a response by an intention. This is the hidden dimension of the long, ramified, intertextual memory of uptake: the object is taken from a set of possibles. The distinctive methodological move of speech-act theory is to eliminate these possible others."[47] She goes on to argue that the effective strategy of power is to block and select the memory that generates uptake, thereby working to create intentional outcomes by eliminating the sets of possibles. By calling out the limits of speech-act theory, Freadman exposes the role of institutional power in the social dynamics of words doing things, a matter Austin sets aside.

For the purposes of this chapter, Freadman's work offers a means for seeing the ways in which even the seemingly most powerless—enslaved blacks who could not read—were yet the principal actors in the drama of defining emancipation, making freedom, and dismantling slavery.[48] While much of the history of emancipation orients its occurrence around the political ingenuity and tempered morality of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator, uptake challenges the belief that emancipation followed as the automatic outcome intended by the Proclamation. Although Lincoln labored obsessively to construct a policy of emancipation constitutionally sound and executable, his declaration would not—perhaps even could not—bring emancipation if not for the ways in which blacks modified its meaning. As the enslaved circulated the news, they did not take up the conditions for emancipation as outlined by the Proclamation; rather, they took as their object their own aspirations of freedom, informed by a long and all too present memory of slavery, resistance, and escape; abolitionism and manumission; the Declaration of Independence, America's own fight for freedom from Britain, previous black military participation, and the egalitarian symbolism of the North; and a host of other possibles that emancipation evoked. The alternative literacy that developed around the Proclamation's circulation employed particular reading heuristics to apprehend the broader significance of emancipation not represented in the Proclamation.

While it is difficult to trace the exact patterns and multitudinous ways in which information traveled along what Booker T. Washington called the "grapevine telegraph," it would be helpful to consider some of the communicative sources from which information and new meaning about emancipation dispersed. Those blacks who could read were critical to the dissemination of the news of emancipation among slave quarters. Mail carriers and newspaper fetchers developed "clever machinations" of well-organized communication networks that spread news within and across plantations. One such network is what later Reconstruction Mississippi state senator George Washington Albright called "the 4-Ls—Lincoln's Legal Loyal League" wherein he described his role as "travel[ing] about the plantations within a certain range and g[etting] together small meetings in the cabins."[49] In this way, blacks circulated information about emancipation, the status of the war, and the advancement of Union forces that slaveholders sought to keep from them or outside of the doctored narratives of the war slaveholders told. In the vein of bypassing news from one's own slaveholder, trips off the plantation, particularly into town, presented opportunity for exposure to news about emancipation unadulterated by plantation whites. Plantations were situated in relative degrees of seclusion from towns, centers of news, and pedestrian traffic and affairs. Landowners and managers used this separation from the town to control the social and cultural climate of the plantation, regulating (or attempting to regulate) who and what was able to enter and exit. In this way, plantations were more connected with other plantations more so than with the

uncontrollable happenings and news events of town. However, even as slaveowners sought to restrict the communication happening between plantations by limiting the occasions when people from neighboring farms would come together, these channels remained open and well-traveled by the enslaved who had regular mobility in their work. Those who were hired out, ran errands to town for the slaveholders, drove coaches or wagons for their owners to trading centers and courthouses, were members of work gangs, and conscripted to labor for the Confederate army had the opportunity to mingle with other African Americans, both enslaved and free, exchange information, and learn about the world beyond the plantation. Especially as federal forces continued to advance throughout the South, many slaveholders attempted futilely to further seclude their plantation life from exposure and news by further constricting movement off the plantation; cancelling fraternizing events such as barbeques, corn shuckings, marriages, and funerals; and regulating visitors to the plantation. However, the very channels that kept the plantations operative in their relative seclusion also sustained and even developed new communicative networks for the grapevine telegraph.[50]

Even as plantation whites were wary of outside information reaching the enslaved, their very conversations remained a primary source of news about the coming emancipation. Without fail, planters, their families, and family visitors abreast of wartime events and their implications for the Southern way of life talked about it constantly. Eavesdropping occurred just as surreptitiously as reading, and it promoted methods of recounting to others what was overheard on frequencies that resisted detection. As slaveholders became more aware that blacks were apprised of the "abolition version of what is going on," they became more guarded in their discussions. Because of his suspicions, one South Carolinian, William Henry Trescott resorted to speaking French in the presence of his servants, saying "We are using French against Africa […] We know the black waiters are all ears now, and we want to keep what we have to say dark. We can't afford to take them in our confidence, you know." But, as Litwack accounts, the greater the precautions planters took, the greater the alertness and eagerness the enslaved employed to gather information.[51] The enslaved also devised strategies to develop their own codes and vocabularies to communicate news updates. For example, black educator Robert Russa Moton recounts, "If a slave coming back from town greeted a fellow servant with the declaration, 'Good-mornin, Sam, yo' look mighty greasy this morning,' that meant that he had picked up some fresh information about the prospects for freedom which would be divulged later on."[52] Against the best efforts of whites to keep the meaning and implications of emancipation "dark" to exclude the enslaved, the very spatial structuring of plantation seclusion required that those who were to remain ignorant of outside affairs were always around the discussions of these affairs. Not only did the Civil War and the coming of emancipation reveal the dependence of the slave south on black labor and black loyalty, it underscored the ironies of enslavement in that despite systematic attempts to suppress the agency of the enslaved, within the structural operations of slavery were the conditions for the enslaved to be central agents in moving along the event of emancipation. Case in point, Anna Baker, a servant girl well placed in the house to overhear many of the conversations by whites, was petitioned by her slaveholder to find out what the other blacks on the plantation were discussing. However, Baker used her position to perform quite the opposite. She says, "Master would tell me, 'Loosanna, if you keep you ears open

and tell me what de darkies talk about, there'll be something good in it for you…But all the time I must a-had a right smart mind because I'd play around the white folks and hear what they'd say and then go tell the niggers."[53]

While the three sources of news supplied information about emancipation, the meaning of emancipation, particularly among the enslaved, developed as the news circulated further away from the source. In this way, the ability to read the text of the Emancipation Proclamation or reports of the proclamation was not the central means to decipher and co-construct the meaning of emancipation. Rather, knowledge of emancipation was attained through a literacy adept to indexically situating emancipation in the larger contexts of slavery, freedom, race relations, war, morality, and the nation's founding principles/values. This literacy privileges understanding the language of emancipation in terms of its use as *parole* over its semantic significance as *langue*.

Just as the textual artifact of the Emancipation Proclamation had little significance for the day to day lives of the enslaved, the word emancipation itself lacked signification until its meaning was situated in a context of concepts familiar and that already affected their conditions of living. The enslaved understood certain figures as emblematic of positions of power, by which they could comprehend larger political and social shifts. Particular micro-positions within the structure of the plantation—e.g. landowner, overseer, driver, traveling preacher, visiting Northern family member—paralleled with a range of macro-positions such as Southern aristocracy, varying degrees of social and cultural capital among whites, proslavery radicals, and liberal antislavery whites. Accordingly, reading the shifts in positions of power. In many cases, those who overheard news of emancipation were able to ascertain the significance of impending emancipation by deciphering slaveholders' reactions, attitudes, and sentiments. Changes in disposition were often directly related to the proximity of Union troops, warranting a range of responses from assuming a benign attitude, lessening the severity of punishments, and even apologizing for brutality in some cases; to fits of anger, violent hysteria, and in some cases, mortally punishing those who celebrated their emancipation too soon.[54]

In addition to reading the reactions and responses of plantation whites to the news of impending emancipation, enslaved blacks also deduced the meaning of emancipation through word associations. Emancipation gained semiotic significance by the ways in which black listeners and performative readers made indexical connections between emancipation and signifiers such as Yankees, Northerners, and abolitionism. Litwack states, "From the vantage point of the house slave, news about the war sometimes consisted of overhearing angry outbursts and harangues by the whites, punctuated with wild talk about abolitionists seizing the South, Yankees coming to kill 'us all,' a war 'to free the niggers,' and how the Confederates intended to send 'de damn yaller bellied Yankees' reeling back to the North."[55] These word associations elucidated how the use of emancipation provided the contextual definition for its meaning; sentiments over emancipation's implication informed emancipation signification more so than the parameters of its definition. Similar to reading the gesticulatory responses of whites to news of emancipation, enslaved blacks practiced a kind of metapragmatic listening, pairing particular word associations with tones of disdain, apprehensiveness, and various forms of excitement. This listening for the sentiment accompanying emancipatory language in use disclosed not only what emancipation is but also the ways in which it precipitated and

would be accompanied by the demise of the South's peculiar institution. Fitting for the ironies of slavery that the war brought to attention, many of the enslaved were aware of the humorous irony of slaveowners being overtaken by their anxieties and fear of capture by Union forces that they became fugitives, even passing for contrabands.[56]

As news traveled through these circuits of communication, emancipation as a strategic and abstract concept acquired deeper denotational meaning. The alternative literacy that enslaved blacks developed in circulating news of emancipation discerned the metatext of the Proclamation—that is, meaning which emancipation entailed but that the document of the Proclamation did not entextualize or, that meaning outside of or in excess of the parameters of the Proclamation. The circulation of emancipation drew attention increasingly away from the definitional confines of the letter of the Proclamation and instigated meditations on pragmatic manifestations of the spirit of emancipation. Frederick Douglass, the formerly enslaved turned abolitionist—who, by the time of the Civil War and Lincoln's emancipation policy was famous for, among other things, his account of how he taught himself to read while yet enslaved—remarked that despite the limited scope of Lincoln's proclamation, it has a significance beyond its words. Amid the disappointment felt by most anti-slavery abolitionists, Douglass "saw in its spirit a life and power far beyond its letter. Its meaning to me was the entire abolition of slavery…and I saw that its moral power would extend much further."[57] In effect, emancipation's meaning shifted in its circulation as readings of its "life of the spirit" commingled with anxious anticipation and hopes of fulfilled desire. As the news was carried across different registers of literacy, the letter of the Proclamation succumbed to looseness, to an expansive and practical understanding of emancipation as the declaration of freedom from enslavement. Two key examples demonstrate how this looseness both opens up the strict terms of emancipation and, in effect, redefines emancipation as grounded in social practices. One example is soon after the September 22nd release of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, those enslaved knew that freedom was so imminent that many began to celebrate and even perform trying out life in freedom. The coming of the news is particularly significant in the border states, where emancipation did not apply, for the ways in which the enslaved laid claim to what they believed to be freedom already come. Franklin reports, "In the same way that slaves in rebel states did not wait until January 1 to see if they were free, slaves in border states seemed to ignore the fact that the Proclamation would not apply to them in any case. In Maryland they began to act as freedmen, and many went into the nation's capital to live. In Kentucky there were so many asserting their freedom that the Louisville *Journal* asked Negro leaders to explain to slaves that the Proclamation did not affect slavery in Kentucky."[58] In this case, the parameters of whom emancipation applied to became moot, as those who were enslaved—regardless of where they resided—celebrated the coming of emancipation and anticipated it bringing the end of their lives under slavery. As news circulated, for the enslaved to "act as freedmen" was not bounded by the January 1st effective date of the Proclamation. Franklin writes, "Whenever the word reached an area, or better still, whenever the Army reached an area, Negroes began to exercise some of the privileges of free people. […] On Magnolia Plantation in Mississippi, slaves declined to work on Christmas Day 1862, saying that, having never had a chance to keep it before, 'they would avail themselves of the privilege now, they thought.'"[59] In this example, emancipation had little to do with its political intention as military strategy but it was the

opportunity to grasp a practical understanding of the *feel* of not being under the yoke of slavery. The circulation of emancipation precipitated efforts to "get the feel" of freedom and to experientially test the limits of life in this newfound—or at least newly acknowledged—space of freedom. Enslaved blacks and plantation whites knew that the Proclamation itself could not transform an enslaved man into a free man, nor could a Union officer or Northern missionary make blacks free. Rather, as Litwack argues, "To know 'de feel of bein' free' demanded that the ex-slave begin to act like a free man, that he test his freedom, that he make some kind of exploratory move, that he prove to himself (as well as to others) by some concrete act that he was truly free. The nature or the boldness of the act was far less important than the feeling he derived from it."[60] In addition to the disruption of the status quo that accompanied the circulation of emancipation, the immediacy of it significance expressed an urgency that was not and could not be contained within the letter of the proclamation. Although January 1st marked the date of the executive enforcement of emancipation policy, the very issuance and circulation of the news of emancipation immediately altered the landscape of social and political dispositions, behaviors, and practices.

Perhaps, one of the more significant interventions accomplished by this alternative literacy developed around emancipation is that it exposes the dissonance existing between the spirit and the letter of emancipation's proclamation. As the news circulated and the meaning of emancipation was reappropriated and reconstituted, the letter emancipation was loosened so much so that in circulation, the proclamation's legibility occurred on the register of the intention of its spirit, or the promise/anticipation of its universal manifestation. Or, more succinctly, the centrifugal pull of circulation expands the parameters, and subsequently, the meaning of emancipation from specificity to universality.

There are two basic specificities that the letter of the proclamation employed to foreclose universal emancipation and the abolition of slavery. First, emancipation was contained geopolitically. As a result of the intersection between the geographical South and the politically insurrectionist Confederacy, emancipation policy sought to use liberation as the means to sever and appropriate the South's lifeline: black labor. Although slavery existed beyond the South, most notably in the Union border states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, emancipation policy sought to free those enslaved only in the South. As the case of the border states attest, the proclamation did not emancipate the enslaved where slavery existed but only where political allegiance with the federal government was rejected. In this way, the proclamation made selective exemptions as to where the emancipation policy did and did not apply, even in the Confederate South. Certain districts, such as those that were already under Union control, and therefore not in rebellion, were not subject to the federal order. Political allegiance with the Union made allowance for the continued existence of slavery. Emancipation was restricted to those states and districts that maintained Confederate allegiances. In effect, the Proclamation's geopolitical specifications signify emancipation as an act of penalization, not liberation.

Second, the letter of the Emancipation Proclamation constricted the spirit of emancipation, setting it under the conditions of a one hundred day ultimatum. The September 22, 1862 issuance of the Proclamation gave until January 1, 1863 for those in rebellion against the United States government to either renounce their secession or suffer the penalty of their enslaved property being emancipated. That the Proclamation was

subject to a hundred day wait before going into effect marked emancipation as a strategic attempt to bring closure to the war and was an indication that the war aims had not yet shifted to the issue of slavery and freedom. Rather, these hundred days subjected the spirit of emancipation to the conditional allowance for compromise. Immediately, the hundred-day deferral of emancipation collided with the disruption that the news of emancipation brought, intentionally frustrating the execution of emancipation and its concomitant effects on the purpose of the war, political allegiances, slavery, freedom, race relations, and national modes of production. The conditions of the Proclamation worked to contain all that emancipation could mean, subjecting the potential social action of its intervention to an invitation to compromise. The letter of the Proclamation begs the question, if those in the Confederacy would have ceased their rebellion against the Union, would a policy for emancipation have been issued? Taken together, the letter and the spirit of Lincoln's proclamation reflect not only his apprehensiveness but also the nation's conflicting interest in and motivation for emancipation. Yet, despite Lincoln's labors to contain the spirit of emancipation in its letter, the ways in which emancipation was used in circulation far exceeded the curtailment of its letter.

While the dissonance between the letter and the spirit of emancipation appear stark, once it traverses different registers of literacy, emancipation becomes increasingly characterized by its looseness of interpretation. For example, Robert Falls recalls the words of his slaveowner on the day he announced emancipation: "No I wont whip you. Never no more. […] I hates to do it but I must. You all aint my niggers no more. You is free. Just as free as I am." In another example, Annie Gregg recounts the startling way she found out about emancipation. In an act of resistance against her mistress, the slaveowner interjected, scolding his wife and reminding her that "the slaves were now 'as free as you are or I am."[61] In these instances, it is in the paraphrased rewording, in the looseness of the reported speech, that that which is in excess of the letter emerges and signifies meaning for emancipation. This excess, the life of the spirit that Douglass saw in the Proclamation, is neither read or heard in the language of the text but is discerned by an interpretive metareading of the Proclamation. Looseness occurs by interpreting and contextualizing emancipation according to its potential implications on race, freedom, and citizenship. In this way, the animators of the news of emancipation affect its meaning, such that reading of the emancipation policy is "translated" as "you're as free as I am," when that is far from the parameters and intent of any governmental text on the matter. In fact, emancipation policy wanted to stay as far away from analogizing the freedom of freed black people with white landowners, rebel or not. And yet, this paraphrasing is not a misreading because across the North and South, among pro-slavery and anti-slavery supporters, the announcement of emancipation immediately called to attention issues of how to qualify the convergence of race, freedom, and citizenship. These are the waters in which the spirit of emancipation treads, despite its greatest effort to be narrowly focused martially and politically.

The dissonance between the spirit of emancipation and the letter of the Proclamation also alludes to the tension between the social action of emancipation and the allowances of its temporal context. The spirit of emancipation—that which the enslaved comprehended through their own reading heuristics, the other life that Douglass saw in the Proclamation, and the paraphrased translations of emancipation by slaveholders—does not inhere in the textual artifact of an executive order but in a discursive event whose value

extends beyond its contemporary moment. All that is radical about emancipation resides in the use of its spirit, in the ways in which intended and unintended interlocutors interpretively uptake what exceeds the letter. Ironically, however, the goals of the spirit of emancipation are not immediate; its fulfillment is premised on a hope for the future that the present either cannot, does not, or refuses to imagine. But, in order to set this spirit of a radically different governmental imaginary of American freedom in motion, Lincoln as federal executor needed to house/frame all that he could imagine emancipation to entail trans-temporally into a governmental voicing that is subject to and burdened by a political rhetoric characterized by mis-representative words. The letter of Lincoln's emancipation policy is racially nebulous, socially trepidatious, and politically compromising. And yet, the spiritually dissonant banality of the letter of the proclamation is necessary because it mobilizes—however distractedly or indirectly—the aspiration of emancipation into action. The value of the spirit of emancipation harkens to a later moment, to a future hope; the value of the letter of emancipation is in its immediate force, as a declaration that set in motion a rapid shifting of social and political relations by the ways in which emancipation is taken up in use. Perhaps, could it be that the spirit/letter dissonance of emancipation was necessary to perform what it imagined itself doing, both as a war measure and as a socially reconstructive act? For both the sociopolitical moment and a future more representative of America's founding values? Prior to the Proclamation's announcement, Lincoln too wrestled with these questions, contemplating how he can issue an executive order with operative effect. He says, "I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope's bull against the comet! Would *my word* free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel states?"[62] As an anti-slavery Republican, Lincoln was quite vocal prior to his presidency of his opposition to slavery and his desire to do away with this institution altogether. While this sentiment is lurking in the spirit of emancipation, Lincoln expresses doubt as to whether he—even imbued with the executive power of the presidency—would be able to accomplish such a goal in such a political climate. Lincoln's concern is whether the constitutive elements of the spirit of emancipation—moral power and triumph, unprejudiced personal dispositions on race and slavery, and rectifying social divisions consequent of the present terms of race relations—would be enforceable. At issue for Lincoln is not whether he was at odds with what universal emancipation would entail; rather, he was concerned with finding words that entail operative action. Lincoln was interested in how to effectively do things with institutionally legitimated words. This raises the question Lincoln himself probably considered: can the spirit of emancipation do things, operative and enforceable, as Lincoln believed words could do?

The short answer appears to be no because spirit is not enforceable. The meaning that emancipation acquires as a result of its reappropriation and demonstration in physical and social practices was not legally recognized nor entextualized as rights to which freed blacks are entitled and which are to be protected. The more the news of emancipation circulated, the more the dissonance between the spirit and letter of emancipation became pronounced, and the more precarious emancipation itself appeared. Since the word of the emancipation policy remained narrowly focused to its wartime purposes, the shifts in racial and social dynamics in the potential of emancipation were often easily circumvented, repressed, or starkly ignored, even by federal forces, the very extension of executive power.

Accounts abound about the racially discriminatory practices and abuse enacted by Union troops on freed blacks behind army lines or of anti-slavery supporters who maintain racial prejudices about freed blacks. The typical Union officer was a "reluctant liberator," harboring attitudes and exhibiting behavior that many of the freed found all too similar to the prejudice, exploitation, disparagement, and sadism of the plantation. This was not uncommon, even for liberal anti-slavery whites, who were supportive, at least in part, of the life of the spirit of emancipation. In this way, Litwack parallels the problems of these well-meaning officers with the abolitionist movement in that many "found it easier to preach abolitionism than to accept the black man as an equal or to mix with him socially." One Massachusetts soldier writes, "I know I always revolt at shaking hands with a darkey or sitting by him, but it is a prejudice that should shame me. […] In me those prejudices are very strong. I can fight for this race more easily than I can eat with them."[63] Even for Lincoln, the development of his ideas toward an emancipation policy was always directly and intensely connected to developing a colonization plan to export freed black Americans out of the country as a consequent of fears and sociocultural myopia concerning racial coexistence. Notwithstanding the expansion of the meaning and significance of emancipation, and the occasion for behaviors and practices for the enslaved to "test their freedom," emancipation did not change the conditions of slavery, leaving very little distinction for the freed between life in slavery and life in freedom—or more accurately, life in non-enslavement. The state of the white South post-Civil War is captured by Litwack when he says, "Although resigned to legal emancipation for nearly four million black men and women, most whites clung even more tenaciously to traditional notions of racial solidarity and black inferiority. Whatever 'mischief' emancipation unleashed, what it could not do […] was far more crucial: it could not transform the Negro into a white man."[64] The precariousness of emancipation ominously exposed the liminal space, that state of limbo between non-slave and free, that would frame black life in America for at least the following hundred years until the dismantling of Jim Crow social politics and the legal victories of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

Understanding the precariousness of emancipation broadens its meaning in context beyond its contemporaneous construction, announcement, circulation, and reconstitution to consider its meaning and effect over time. When historian Leon Litwack asks of the post-emancipation moment, "How free is free?" he brings to attention the difficulties and problems that America's governmental voice—be it executive, legislative, or judicial—had and would continue to have validating and enforcing its articulations of freedom. This precariousness also brings into focus a retrospectively curious question as to how is it that the Emancipation Proclamation came to be lauded as among the great American freedom documents? How does the Emancipation Proclamation gain the value it does with time, that it did not involve at the moment of its announcement? What made it possible for the Emancipation Proclamation to accumulate its value, especially considering its inability to accomplish its goal to enforce the "henceforth and forever free" promise extended to formerly enslaved black Americans? These questions call out a problem with governmental articulations of freedom, a problem situated at the intersection of racial paranoia, delusional notions of fixed and original meanings of the American founding principles, and neurotic use of mis-representative words indexing constitutional authority while remaining

disconnected from the pragmatics of everyday life and living. But because the nodal points in this intersection are based on continually shifting sociopolitical situations, the largely unstable and fluid problem of governmental articulations of freedom become recognizable mostly only in hindsight. Or, as James Weldon Johnson states in "Legal Status of Negro Americans, "We can't recognize the shifts that are going on just before our eyes, but when we look back, we can get the perspective."[65] Retrospection offers the means to consider how emancipation's value over time is directly related to the ways in which it is taken up over time.

Today, emancipation is memorialized (and Lincoln valorized) because its utterance ruptured the social dynamics and power relations of its moment in, at the time, unprecedented fashion. The Emancipation Proclamation's historical legacy signals it as the turning point transforming the Civil War from a matter of political rebellion to social revolution. The social and racio-political dynamics of American life were forever disrupted by the official and authorized announcement of the coming of emancipation. But the ensuing precariousness of freedom brings that very disruption into relief.

When reading emancipation policy according to the specificity of its letter, it becomes increasingly clear that the radicalism of the Emancipation Proclamation is retrospectively constructed through a commemorative imaginary. According to the contractual conditions of the Proclamation, emancipation presents itself more akin to manumission—the agreeable releasing of the enslaved such that it does not disrupt the institution of slavery. Manumission functioned through selectivity, most notably through the satisfaction of particular conditions (e.g. the performance of good behavior, the fulfillment of the slaveholder's good nature, acceptance of the terms of contractual obligation from a previous owner, or payment of a consensual settled price for release). While meeting whichever conditions required officially annulled the enslaver-enslaved relation, the racialized oppression characterizing this power relation persisted even in freedom—or, outside of the dyad.[66] Reading Lincoln's emancipation policy against the contractual text of manumission reveals the Proclamation's hesitancy to abolish slavery or free the enslaved. This becomes more evident when reading the text of the Proclamation. It states:

> That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within an state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States including the military and naval authority thereof will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they make for their actual freedom.[67]

There are two provisions here that trouble the significance of the Proclamation's intervention as rupture. The first concerns a matter of audience. Although the Emancipation Proclamation is represented as historically responsible for freeing the enslaved, the enslaved were not the Proclamation's intended readership, nor was its command directed toward the enslaved, nor was the freedom of the enslaved intended to stand on its own as the Proclamation's outcome. In other words, the Emancipation

Proclamation was not for enslaved blacks but for a rebellious white citizenry. The Proclamation's focus was concession and compromise, not disruption. The second provision calling into question emancipation's disruptive significance is the document's slippery language around freedom. The first mention addresses emancipation's functional meaning, referencing the release of all persons held as slaves. The second and third mentions are more indeterminate, setting up what reads as a dual meaning of freedom. The former alludes to the state of being non-enslaved, a freedom which the executive government promises to recognize and maintain. The latter mention evokes a freedom that is not a part of emancipation, an "actual" freedom acquired through effort. By differentiating a given freedom from an actual freedom, the Emancipation Proclamation is careful in marking the line between releasing the enslaved from slavery only and not making the enslaved free people. In effect, this dual notion of freedom functions to quarantine the disruptive implications emancipation brings to the racial landscape of freedom and Americanness, reserving actual freedom to the rights of citizenship, a state secured by the standard of whiteness. While the Proclamation positions itself as a radical rupture pronouncing those enslaved freed (released), within its declaration it sought to leave untouched the rhythm and flow of life for whiteness, American identity, and citizenship.[68] Attacking slavery's most recognizable form—that of the slaveholder and the enslaved—consequently leaves the other forms of racialized power relations outside of the master-slave dyad largely unspoken and unaddressed.

This is part of the trouble with understanding the accumulated value of emancipation: Lincoln's policy can easily be read as both largely progressive, ambitiously renovating America's racial and political landscape; and as largely conservative, cautious enough to fit within the confines of the political parameters of its day. Holzer's *Emancipating Lincoln*, is again useful since part of his aim is to reevaluate the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation in its own time, which requires salvaging both the document and its author from revisionist histories that fail to wrestle with understanding the complexities of the past as its participants lived it. In an effort to debunk the "grossly oversimplified" versions of the Proclamation's history and impact, Holzer works to "reintroduce authenticity" and "peel away the layers of myth and misunderstanding that have clouded the reputation of both 'emancipator' and emancipation."[69] According to Holzer, most exaggerated oversimplifications can be grouped within two approaches. The first is a history of praise, wherein the Emancipation Proclamation is lauded as the second Declaration of Independence, responsible for simultaneously reunifying the nation and redefining American liberty so as to midwife what Lincoln himself calls "a new birth of freedom."[70] Subsequently, Lincoln is memorialized as the "Great Emancipator," remembered—as he claimed would happen—for his role as liberator. The second approach is a much harsher revision, where emancipation was mostly a representative gesture that did not fulfill what is set out to accomplish. In this regard, Lincoln's resistance to universally abolishing slavery, his hesitancy in being firmly anti-slavery, and his own efforts to shroud his true motivations leading up to the announcement of emancipation make him more of an obstructionist than a liberator. In addition to these, Holzer's scholarship represents a third approach, one that encompasses the goals of *Emancipating Lincoln*. Here, a materialist historiography frames the Emancipation Proclamation as a sheer act of

resilience, a product of Lincoln's mental and political fortitude and genius, forged in the "incomprehensibly severe pressures" of its contextual moment.

As Holzer points out, the ways in which supporters and critics of the Emancipation Proclamation regard its accrued value determine what kind of revisionist history they construct. This performs a disservice to history by disregarding the nuanced conditions and challenges of the moment within which emancipation emerged. But Holzer's approach also struggles to give direct attention to the significance of emancipation in its moment. As the title of text suggest, understanding the Proclamation in text, context, and memory is subjected to the project of emancipating Lincoln. While carefully and attentively reconstructing 1862 and 1863, Holzer responds to the obstacles confronting a constitutionally sound and pragmatically executable emancipation policy by shifting his focus away from the phenomenon of emancipation and onto Lincoln. This shift represents the inclination to conflate the value of emancipation—both in its contextual moment and over time—with a historical reverence for Lincoln. While Holzer refutes the simplified tendency to praise emancipation out of a general praise for Lincoln, without explicitly saying so, he too is unintentionally contributing to the saintly deification of Lincoln. Or perhaps it is intentional and *Emancipating Lincoln* is about saving Lincoln from his haters. In no way does this mean that the moment of emancipation must be analyzed apart from Lincoln; however to consider the contextual significance of emancipation, Lincoln must be dislodged as its crafty progenitor whose "extraordinary skills as a political strategist, moral voice, peerless prose writer, and ultimately a living and then martyred symbol of freedom" made emancipation a reality. Understanding emancipation in context must look beyond the how and why of Lincoln's savvy navigating the complications to an effective policy, and must consider the broader network of forces, both authorized and unauthorized, that simultaneously set in motion the news and enactment of emancipation.[71]

Another significant caveat for the kind of rupture the Proclamation affects is that it is a policy of emancipation that occurs during wartime. On one hand, time of war offers occasion for the suspension of normal laws and mores. This made allowances for blacks and whites to work cooperatively to accomplish Union war aims, in spite of the prominence of scientifically justified racial prejudice and claims of black inferiority. On the other hand, emancipation offered means to alleviate the plight of federal forces, using Southern manpower for Union employment and service. As mentioned earlier, the radicalism of the Emancipation Proclamation's liberating power can be drawn into question because of its similarities with large-scale manumission in that emancipation was not an act to end slavery and universally free the enslaved but to selectively disable slavery in exchange for peace and reunion. The Emancipation Proclamation lacked what the radical abolitionist Republican senator Thaddeus Stevens calls the "courage" to make the larger humanitarian move to abolish the institution of slavery.[72] Lincoln's own strategies are also important in the Proclamation being understood as such because his policy on emancipation—particularly his acts of subterfuge leading up to the announcement—sequestered the moral standard of slavery's injustice and confines it to the realm of personal disposition, distinct and apart from the political. What Lincoln believed about the morality of slavery is a personal matter that does not—or at least he is explicit in expressing that it does not—inform his decision on the Proclamation. This foreclosure of moral justice to personal disposition, subjecting it to political goals and ingenuity, severely undercuts the hope that

Douglass articulates as the moral power in the spirit of emancipation extending beyond the temporality and semantic meaning of the text. Also, this move reifies governmental policy of moral acknowledgement and practical deferment concerning black civil rights, setting the stage for President Rutherford Hayes' socially and civically egregious Compromise of 1877.

Lincoln's shift in footing between moral humanitarian and political strategist carries over to even the careful historian's preoccupation with Lincoln as political genius. Both dispositions somehow lose sight of the direct object of emancipation and support provisions for a freedom that is not for black people. This slippage becomes evident when considering the Proclamation in text and in Holzerian context. Lincoln realized his act of emancipation would be constitutionally invalid if he attempted to free the enslaved in Confederate states. As a way to circumvent the federal encroachment on states' rights, Lincoln addressed the conditions of emancipation to the individual people who were in rebellion against the United States. While this political maneuvering is indeed savvy, it also significantly limited the scope of emancipation. Eligibility for the enslaved within the Confederacy was dependent on whether or not their slaveholder remained in rebellion against the Union. In bizarre constitutional irony, black people did not own the freedom that emancipation intended for them.

In another case, about a month prior to the September release of the Proclamation, Lincoln hosted a "Deputation of Free Negroes," a conference between himself and a number of well-situated free blacks in Washington D.C. The meeting was less than promising, as Lincoln used the time to offer a naively patronizing diatribe on the burden black Americans impose on the nation and suggesting voluntary colonization for the benefit of both blacks and white Americans. Holzer suggests that this ungraceful colonization lecture was but a ploy used by Lincoln to "encourag[e] people to misconstrue him" and hide his true motivations toward emancipation.[73] In an effort to call attention to the "broader context of public relations as well as military strategy," Holzer winks at Lincoln's "heartless words" and purported racism arguing that Lincoln was playing for the support of moderates, particularly Northern Democrats and border state loyalists, both leading up to and even after he issues the Proclamation. After explaining the political ingenuity about which the African American press, the broader African American community, and even Frederick Douglass's philosophical critique were all naïve, Holzer postulates:

> Harsh? Yes. Politically correct? Hardly. A stain on Lincoln's record? Perhaps. But with fall congressional elections looming, Union sentiment on the North fading, border states now on record as hostile to freedom, and the press maddeningly divided on all of the above, *Lincoln probably had no choice*. The bitter pill of prejudice, along with the impractical and inhumane concept of colonization, was his choice of emetic for a body politic he believed needed purging in preparation for an act he hoped […] might only be days away from promulgation.[74]

Holzer's treatment of this White House conference is a clear example of when a preoccupation with strategy goes awry, for both Lincoln and Holzer. For Lincoln, the physical presence of these well-situated free blacks, as well as their significance as representative of what emancipation could accomplish, is overlooked and rendered invisible. According to the logic of Lincoln's public relations strategy, the purpose of the

meeting had nothing to do with those who were invited. While hosting free African Americans, Lincoln concerned himself more with his uninvited and yet intended audience of moderate Union whites. In Holzer's reconstruction of the scene, his veneration of Lincoln as a political tragic hero similarly overlooks what this event signifies about emancipation to fixate upon public relations and political strategy. Although the argument that Lincoln "had no choice" works in the service of lionizing Lincoln, it does so at the expense of critically attending to how this event affects the impact of emancipation, in the moment as well as over time.

Lincoln's historical legacy rests on his ability to make the tough decisions when it appears he has no choice. His public relations strategies prior to the Emancipation Proclamation are indicative of his response to the difficulties of attempting to unify a nation fractured by faction. However, in an effort to temper the many factions concerning his policy, serious attention to the needs and concerns of African Americans themselves regarding emancipation is overlooked. Especially because this conference was the very first time a president has invited a group of African Americans to "confer" with him, Lincoln's episode establishes a significant precedent for future presidents (as well as other branches of the federal government) to take the occasion to reject black as American in the interest of appealing to and abetting a racially recalcitrant notion of America. Emancipation begets a governmental legacy where feigning the "bitter pill of prejudice" for politically strategic purposes too often becomes a reality. The event of this deputation and Holzer's historical treatment of it illustrate the ways in which the stage of emancipation features the political maneuvers of the Emancipation Proclamation and its author, overlooking the actors and activities of the freedom of black Americans.

To consider the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation in context in this way exposes a striking discrepancy between the Proclamation's impact and its value. How can one reconcile the curious consecration of an emancipation policy that calls for a freedom from enslavement that those enslaved could not own? This discrepancy between the contexualized past and the present's retrospective veneration of emancipation constitutes what Christina Sharpe calls the problem of liberation. Sharpe explains, "…representative narratives of subjection in slavery and freedom position us to see that in order to survive and map visible progress we may indeed have (or feel that we have) no choice but to erase the lack of agency, to turn violation into affection, to be silent about the sadomasochism of everyday black life, to hide the horror for future generations to uncover."[75] The desire by post-slavery subjects to depict and perform freedom in progress positions their contemporary readership to "see and feel anew the ways multiple intimacies […] and the desire to be free requires one to be witness to, participant in, and be silent about scenes of subjection that we rewrite as freedom."[76] For Sharpe, this problem of liberation is a politically sponsored problem of redemption.[77] The desire to chart the progress of freedom, even at the expense of contending with the violence of subjection, vindicates the Emancipation Proclamation as representative of the great triumph of American freedom, even at the expense of overlooking its black subject, providing for selective and conditional emancipation, and marking black bodies and black labor as confiscated property.

The resonances of the dissonance between the spirit and the letter of emancipation extended beyond the news of emancipation's immediate circulation to black intellectual's retrospective assessment and criticism at the turn of the twentieth century of emancipation

as a nonevent. While not dismissing the moment of emancipation as total hoax, such leaders advocated a recalibration of emancipation as something that should be treated with caution more so than celebration. The Proclamation's unfulfilled promises and lack of governmental support functioned to simply release blacks from slavery into a space of uncertain and precarious freedom, no longer enslaved but not quite free citizen. Especially after the demise of Reconstruction and the withdrawal of federal support for black civil rights, black intellectual leaders recognized the difficulty in relying on governmental articulations of freedom and worked to develop self-determined meanings of freedom for black Americans.

Chapter Two

FOR THE SAKE OF FREEDOM

On March 5, 1877, Rutherford B. Hayes delivered his inaugural address for the presidency of the United States. After the requisite acknowledgment of his predecessors and the duties of the office, Hayes begins:

> The permanent pacification of the country upon such principles and by such measures as will secure the complete protection of all its citizens in the free enjoyment of all their constitutional rights is now the one subject, in our public affairs, which all thoughtful and patriotic citizens regard as of supreme importance.
>
> Many of the calamitous effects of the tremendous revolution which has passed over the Southern States still remain. […] Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the cause of this condition of things, the fact is clear, that, in the progress of events, the time has come when such [self] government is the imperative necessity required by all the varied interests, public and private, of those States. But it must not be forgotten that only a local government, which recognizes and maintains inviolate the rights of all is a true self-government.
>
> With respect to the two distinct races whose peculiar relations to each other have brought upon us the deplorable complications and perplexities which exist in those States, it must be a government which guards the interests of both races carefully and equally. It must be a government which submits loyally and heartily to the Constitution and the laws—the laws of the nation and the laws of the States themselves—accepting and obeying faithfully the whole Constitution as it is. […]
>
> The sweeping revolution of the entire labor system of a large portion of our country, and the advance of four millions of people from a condition of servitude to that of citizenship, upon an equal footing with their former masters, could not occur without presenting problems of the gravest moment, to be dealt with by the emancipated race, by their former masters, and by the general Government, the author of the act of emancipation. That it was a wise, just and Providential act, fraught with good for all concerned, is now generally conceded throughout the country. That a moral obligation rests upon the National Government to employ its constitutional power and influence to establish the rights of the people it has emancipated, and to protect them in the enjoyment of those rights when they are infringed or assailed, is also generally admitted.

> The evils which afflict the Southern States can only be removed or remedied by the united and harmonious efforts of both races, actuated by the motives of mutual sympathy and regard. And while in duty bound and fully determined to protect the rights of all by every constitution means at the disposal of my Administration, I am sincerely anxious to use every legitimate influence in favor of honest and efficient local self-government as the true resource of those States for the promotion of the contentment and prosperity of their citizens […] In the important work of restoring the South, it is not the political situation alone that merits attention. The material development of that section of the county has been arrested by the social and political revolution through which it has passed, and now needs and deserves the considerate care of the National Government, within the just limits prescribed by the Constitution and wise public economy.[78]

Thus began Hayes' presidency, the Republican party's official concession from the radical idealism of Reconstruction, and the return of the politics of compromise. Hayes could now valorize the morality of emancipation and champion Southern home rule in the same address without contradiction. Reunion was no longer on the other side of the upheaval caused by the great social and political revolution that was emancipation and Reconstruction. The road to national reunification would go through "motives of mutual sympathy and regard" between the races and economic growth through material development. In compromise, there is neither victory nor defeat, theoretically. There are only interests and the negotiation of concessions. And so, the principles of Republican idealism would retain its moral authority as it became increasingly distinct from and irrelevant to the political concerns of the day. The argument for what is 'right'—the obligation of the government to "establish the rights of the people it has emancipated, and to protect them in the enjoyment of those rights—remained present alongside the "let alone" policy for states' rights and Southern self-government. Yet the tension between the two was alleviated because 'right' was reduced to a matter of morality only, jettisoned from the realm of political concern and federal enforcement, to be worked out in the private sphere of interpersonal regard. The influence of 'right' would remain in national discourse, variously employed to satiate, vindicate, or justify the national conscience, but not to interfere with the politics of unification.[79]

Hayes orchestrated what was already written on the walls. Republican idealistic aims were dwindling in support and efficacy in 1872, when the party platform for the presidential campaign stated: "the recent amendments to the National Constitution should be sustained because they are right, not merely tolerated because they are law, and should be carried out according to their spirit by appropriate legislation, the enforcement of which can safely be entrusted only to the party that secured those amendments."[80] To be clear, to address the recent constitutional amendments is to address the problem of black inclusion into American social and political life. To juxtapose what is right and what is law is to juxtapose morality and legality, a personal responsibility to respect what is just or fair or subjectively ethical, and a political obligation to adhere to the rules of the land. On the matter of race relations, the Republican platform campaigned on an appeal to accept the constitutional amendments on moral grounds. The party that laid claim to delivering the

oppressed and giving new life to the captive was feeling the weight of their self-proclaimed messianic cross—and it was too much to bear. Political frustrations led to a loss of control throughout the South. Executive ineffectiveness enervated party power. And, perhaps most significantly, social exasperation over the race problem left the party counting the costs and looking for another to endure the burden. The cause for what was 'right' could not be enforced, even when written into law. Radical Republicans realized that force—both legislative and military—was not enough to protect black Americans' rights to life, liberty, citizenship, and suffrage. Grant saw the writing on the wall and, in his second inaugural address, he relented, "Social equality is not a subject to be legislated upon, nor shall I ask that anything be done to advance the social status of the colored man, except to give him a fair chance to develop what there is good in him, give him access to the schools, and when he travels let him feel assured that his conduct will regulate the treatment and fare he will receive."[81] Both Grant and Hayes promote the belief that interracial recognition and sympathy will achieve greater social equality and unity than the federal enforcement of the law. And both are mistaken in believing social equality and civil rights are one and the same. This fallacy would inform the governmental abdication of the obligation to protect black American civil rights, ergo banishing the matter of race and race relations from formal politics to the subjective morality of social recognition. This is the compromise that saved the nation, the concession that would cost nothing but the expendability of black life.

This chapter engages the Compromise of 1877 as much more than the singular political act of the Hayes-Tilden Bargain. In their weariness over "the fiasco of Reconstruction" and on the verge of a potential rebellion over the 1876 presidential dispute, the nation looked to compromise to defer the possibility of another civil war. As much as the compromise looked to the immediate future to prevent what appeared to be imminent sectional conflict, its work was oriented toward the past, to rectify the social and political upheaval of radical Reconstruction. The federal government's resignation from the radical agenda for national unification allowed for a political bargaining that would oppose and reverse the outcomes of the Reconstruction years. The Compromise of 1877 was in effect a counterrevoltuion—a multi-pronged and programmatic plan of action to supplant the type of idealism that fueled Reconstruction and its policies. As counterrevolution, the Compromise of 1877 comprises a series of discursive events beginning well before the 1876 electoral controversy and extending to the turn of the twentieth century.[82] Union troops were withdrawn in Tennessee in 1869; in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia in 1870; in Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas in 1874; and in Mississippi in 1875, in what was called the "redemption" of the former Confederate states.[83] The more ideological tenants of Reconstruction, particularly the intent motivating the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and the equal protection of rights for black Americans, endured severe attack from the Supreme Court in the 1870s and 1880s. The *Civil Rights Cases* decision in 1883 declared Congress's Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional and laid the groundwork for the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which legally sanctioned divesting African Americans of equal rights and protections under the law.

The Compromise of 1877 can be characterized by three operational provisions that connect it to America's larger tradition of political compromise. The key to conciliation between the North and the South was not in finding the harmonious space between 'right' and 'rights' but in maintaining their separation. It is separation itself that permits

coexistence. The second condition of compromise follows that the practical necessity of political unification must take priority over the idealism of principles and moral politics. The coexistence of these two principles does not assume their equality. Rather, the interests involved in the conflict determine the hierarchy of relation in coexistence. In the history of American political compromise, the preservation of the Union is achieved through pragmatic responses to crises threatening tangible interests. Allegiance to the ideals of American principles and values are suspended—albeit however reluctantly or willingly—on the occasion of compromise. The third condition of compromise is the acknowledgement of concession. Beyond the actual political transactions constituting compromise, rhetorical concession is equally, if not more important, because it controls the narrative around compromise, in turn constructing the narrative of unity it purports to bring. The purpose of identifying these conditions is not to develop a paradigmatic structure of compromise but to identify the ways in which recurring motifs of compromise are narratives that reflect an ethically schizophrenic national consciousness searching for a justifiable means of restitution. Particularly with the Compromise of 1877, this search is represented in Rutherford Hayes' language leading up to and immediately following his election as president.

The unity that comes by way of compromise is one premised on conciliation rather than reconciliation. The tradition of compromise in America is not about eliminating the tensions in political factionalism or rectifying ideological discord or even resolving the dissonance between its penchant for political idealism and the utility of a pragmatic approach to politics. America could not for forsake its revolutionary values, for those were the keys to its independence and are the basis for its cultural identity. Nor could it forsake its preference for the practical, for that is what established and ensured the success of America as nation. Acting in the name of preserving the sanctity of idealistic values, compromise favors a pragmatic approach to national unity by conceding the tenets of idealism in the negotiations of the bargain. In essence, compromise in America is a response to political frustrations, tasked with making national ideals of freedom practical and sustainable. This frustration produces narratives of idealism gone awry, or that the idealistic is simply incompatible with the efficiency of effective governance. This is what makes compromise counterrevolutionary. In the infancy of the nation, political compromise was instituted as a *Thermidorian* project to save a fledgling republic from being overthrown by the same revolutionary principles that founded it. In this tradition, the men of 1787 were not unlike those of 1877.[84] The return to compromise was a reactionary undertaking, the *Thermidor* that hoped to establish a new national unity in response to the revolutionary radicalism of Reconstruction.

After the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, the image of America in the national imagination looked fundamentally different. The veil of slavery no longer contained what Hannah Arendt called "the social question"; America was faced with the abjection and poverty of blackness it did not contend with nearly a century earlier because it was rendered invisible, sequestered to the private realm.[85] Now, the moral and the economic were made explicitly political, the private made public, and the nation rejected and refused to rectify what it saw when Reconstruction exposed the effects of the long deferred ethical dissonance between American values and practices. Instead, liberal Democrats and liberal and conservative Republicans throughout the South and North grew

weary of Reconstruction, doubted whether its goals could—or even should—be realized, and became more disposed to sacrificing black Americans in hopes of restoring national harmony. The nation was in search of a means to reestablish the separation Reconstruction had taken away.

The Compromise of 1877's effort to reinvent the configuration of national unity was no new phenomenon. In fact, the nation turned to political compromise on the five different occasions in which the Union was threatened by secession between 1787 and 1861.[86] The history of national unification quickly became the history of political compromise. But this association begs the question why? Why does unification continually look to compromise when it does not work? If the same issues that led to factionalism at the Constitutional Convention were, ultimately, at the root of Civil War some eighty years afterward, why does the nation keep returning to this tradition?

In 1877, compromise succeeded because Reconstruction was not yet a memory in the national consciousness. The counterrevolution of compromise offered an alternative to the frustrations of being held accountable to the egalitarian principles of freedom and democracy, alluring both North and South with the promise of practical and tangible by way of pragmatic politics. With the Compromise of 1877 particularly, Republicans publicly admitted that rebuilding the nation based the idealism of morality and what they regarded as the revolutionary fervor that founded the nation was jejune and at best ineffective. Reunification would necessitate the transfer of supremacy from the law to the people. Playing within the variability of a government "for the people, by the people," compromise repeatedly gave power back to the public will over the idealism of the law. Well before the presidential election, Republicans knew the radical program was no longer politically viable as the will of the white South dismantled the governmental support of black constitutional rights. Ohio Republican James Garfield admitted much to his dismay, "'The future of the negro is a gloomy one unless some new method can be introduced to adjust him to his surroundings. His labor is indispensable to the prosperity of the South. His power to vote is a mortal offense to his late masters. If they control it, it will be not only a wrong to him but a dangerous increase of their power. If he votes against them, as he almost universally inclines to do, he will perpetuate the antagonism which now bears such baneful fruit. I am tangled in the meshes of this strange problem."[87] James Cox, another Ohio Republican, reasoned the restoration of white rule was all but inevitable and that the best course of action was to turn the political rights of black Southerners over to the "natural leaders" of the South.[88]

I am interested in going back to 1877 because in this moment there was a reconstitution of how freedom and national unification figured in the American consciousness. In the name of national unity, the Compromise of 1877 marked the official end of Reconstruction, the federal abandonment of the rights of African Americans, and the reign of white supremacy in the South. However, these measures did not bring unity but greater discord. Moral politics were declared irrelevant and incompatible with pragmatic politics. The "let alone" policy towards the South and the ossification of the race line not only intensified the social and ethical problem of America's racial politics, it also created a crisis of authority as the sovereignty of the law was subjected to the supremacy of the public will. Additionally, the emergence of a Solid South under the banner of white supremacy quickly proved to be farcical, creating bedfellows of conservatives and radicals,

the wealthy and the impoverished, agrarian anti-capitalists and supporters of big business. If this compromise created so much conflict, then why did the nation, both North and South, agree to accepting it? What was it about compromise that made it work despite its failure to resolve the issues that threatened national unity? Yes, the nation had grown weary of a radical politics that sought to institute a government based on the idealistic principals of liberty and equal rights. Yes, compromise offered a pragmatic approach to politics privileging concession and expediency over adherence to principles. But the turn to compromise was much more than a political aversion to Reconstruction. What is significant here are the ways in which the counterrevolutionary project of compromise revisits and reconfigures the revolutionary ideal of freedom in the national consciousness, and imagines a new version of national unity. For better and for worse, the turn toward pragmatic politics that characterize the end of the nineteenth century forward demonstrate how the purported stability of the pragmatic is itself premised on subjectively constructed narratives offering wildly variable revisions of America's freedom ideal and constructions of who and what is identified as an impediment to a new free and unified nation.

I hope to sketch the ways in which this politics of compromise functioned to outmaneuver the political and legal disruptions of emancipation and Reconstruction by exorcizing the ghost of morality from the realm of politics and by recouping the sovereignty of "we, the people" over the legal impositions of the morally guided Reconstruction Amendments. In effect, this created a new narrative image of white American heritage by suturing the revolutionary hand of 1776 with the pragmatic head of 1787. To put it another way: license for the extra-institutional power of public sentiment to protect the secular sanctity of "the people" was combined with the political science of rigidly separating of the social and moral from the political so as to protect economic interests and build a globally preeminent nation unencumbered by domestic social unrest. Consequently, politics would claim to be absolved from having to engage with matters of race and race relations as the Western, white supremacist, bourgeois logic of empire created a modern social world built on the social death of black people. This chapter is an effort to think through this politics of compromise, the world it created, and the implications it has on what it means to be free in America, particularly for black Americans.

Three phenomena provide the backdrop for contextualizing this world: the categorization of the race problem as a social problem, the double bind of emancipation for freedmen and women, and the contingency of freedom for African Americans based on solving the race problem. Concerning the first order, the federal withdrawal from the South completed the disfranchisement of black Americans in a way that intimidation, violence, poll taxes, and other *de facto* provisions against the black vote did not. Framing the political responsibility of the central government to protect the rights of black Americans as a moral obligation rather a Constitutional duty, in effect, supplanted law as the authority concerning black civil rights, displaced black political subjectivity, and evacuated the black political subject of any entitlement the government is bound to enforce. The freedman is denied political subjecthood—not only because he is refused the full rights and privileges of citizen but because he is not seen as a political entity. Under this politics of compromise, a political culture was created that would engage racial discrimination on moral or private and personal grounds, and frame matters of sociality as an entirely distinct sphere of relations. National politics sought absolution from the problems of race, which, in effect, federally sanctioned the political exclusion of black Americans. Black political subjecthood

would be rendered "un-visible": undone, unacknowledged, and yet persistently present, the specter haunting every act of exclusion.[89] The realm of the social would then take center stage. Issues of equality, recognition, rights, and privileges and duties had to be worked out on the more local, interpersonal level measured by Hayes' call to mutual sympathy and harmonious effort. The problem with race that plagued the nation was long a political issue, the source of ideological contradiction and political maneuvering to justify the systematic subjugation of black peoples under slavery. But, with the relegation of the black political subject to the realm of the social, the race problem in America *became* a social problem.[90] Black political legibility is subjected to and made contingent upon social recognition, inclusion, and acceptance.

In addition to political legibility, the very freedom of black Americans was placed under exacting scrutiny. As much as the period of emancipation symbolized a release from one form of bondage, it was also occasion for the organization of a different form of bondage. Missionary societies, planters/white landowners, Southern local judiciaries, and academic disciplines ranging from science to philosophy made African Americans the object of their gaze, measuring their progress according to white, bourgeois values.[91] The logic of this new form of bondage proposed that while blacks were declared free, they did not know *how* to be free. Without guidance, the freedman is ensnared by his own freedom. And so the voices that would come to resound loudest during this period—be they benevolent or malicious or greyishly both—echoed that freedmen and women could not be free until they were taught how to be so. In this world, to be set free is one thing; to be free is another thing entirely.

Under this new politics of compromise, freedom was no longer something that can be withheld or granted; it is always there, available to those who abide under the protections of the Constitution. Freedom, however, would be contingent— dependent upon how a people are able to access and handle the liberties afforded them. Made to bear the weight of their emancipation, the responsibility was placed on black Americans to prove they deserve to be recognized as free and equal citizens. This displacement of responsibility deflected attention away from the racist attitudes and obsessions manifesting into the violent disfranchisement and repressive regulation of black life, particularly in the South. The problem of race in the national imaginary was projected as the Negro question—presumably the vague and complicated, inherent and cultural recalcitrance of black people that keeps them away from full citizenship and equality. As discourse about the "Negro problem" became increasingly pervasive, solving it would become the central focus for racial uplift. Arguably, freedom would not—and hopefully could not—be denied on the other side of the problem, once freed blacks are uplifted.[92] This is the world the postbellum politics of compromise created for black Americans.

On July 5, 1875, Frederick Douglass delivered an address in Washington D.C. for the Independence Day festivities entitled "The Color Question."[93] Douglass speech is prescient: he forecasts the compromise between Republican and Democrat that would lead to the political and social abandonment of black Americans; foregrounds the need for black leadership and an organ to speak up on behalf of the race, decrying injustice, and declaring "the colored race is capable of living more than a life of absolute dependence, and can think and speak for itself"; and promotes the uplifting of the race by the race, shaking off the influence of those missionary societies that seek profit off the image of black degeneracy.

Douglass opens his address claiming to be more concerned with the ominousness of the present than with the glory of the past, stating: "I am not here to glorify the heroes of the American revolution. I simply avail myself of the occasion to say a few plain words of matters suggested by the facts of the present hour, and which immediately concern the colored people of our whole country."[94] Yet Douglass straightway goes on to discuss the Revolution of 1776, the trial of the fathers of the Republic, and the way the Revolution and its Declaration of Independence has already made allowance for a national peace soon to be celebrated at the centennial the following year.

It is interesting to consider why Douglass, though he was most concerned with the present, was repeatedly drawn to 1776. One reason is to parallel the current position of black Americans, on the precipice of a break from the liberal past of emancipation and Reconstruction, with the challenge facing the founding fathers: "The fathers of this Republic, as I have said, had their trial ninety-nine years ago. The colored citizens of this Republic are about to have their trial now. How we shall stand that trial, how we shall pass through it, how we shall come out of it, is to me a matter of great solemnity. The men of the Revolution went through the furnace, and came out pure gold. Shall we, the colored people, present a similar example?"[95] Another reason, seemingly paradoxical to the first, is to invoke unity amongst white Americans. Douglass says:

> Now the thing to be considered to-day is this: Men cannot, ought not and will not quarrel and fight forever , even though outside parties may be benefited by such quarreling and fighting. This is true even of contentions among men of different races, and much more true where men are of the same race. The American people are essentially of the same race. They are of the same color. United by blood, by a common origin, by a common language, by a common literature, by a common glory, and by the same grand historic associations and achievements. So sure as the stars shine in the heavens, and the rivers run to the sea, so sure will the white people North and South abandon their quarrel and become friends. The whole American horizon is already fringed with the portents of this coming union. Boston, Lexington and Bunker Hill have already sent forth their silvery notes of peace and unity to the whole nation, and next year Philadelphia, the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence, will lift to the sky its million voices in one grand Centennial hosannah of peace and good will to all the white race of this country-from gulf to lakes and from sea to sea.[96]

The commemoration of 1776 is a commemoration of the America the people and their values; it is a celebration of their commonalities, of their origins and glorious past. And it is this past that will pave the way for an imminent future of peace.

On the same day in Vicksburg, Mississippi, a celebration organized by a committee of prominent Democrats and Republicans was held at the local courthouse in honor of the "general feeling of amity and fraternity" on occasion of Independence Day.[97] According to an eyewitness only known as "Veni Vedi," about 200 to 300 people, mostly black, arrived to attend. The program began with a reading of the Declaration of Independence by one of the African American ministers in the city, which was followed by an address by the Judge George F. Brown of the Circuit Court "reviewing the history of revolutionary times, and

commenting at large upon the growth and progress of the country, and more especially upon the sentiment of freedom and justice contained in the Declaration of Independence.[98] When secretary of state James Hill began his speech after Judge Brown, a "file of white men" entered the room, lining up along one of the walls of the room. Within minutes, a scuffle broke out, a pistol was fired, and panic ensued as the mob attacked the crowd and the crowd attempted to escape the room. Roughly twenty minutes later, while a crowd of black people lingered about the courthouse, a mob of roughly fifty men armed with rifles arrived and opened fire on the crowd. "Thus," lamented the eyewitness, "ended the ninety-ninth anniversary of American freedom (?) and independence in a free (?) American city! It is a crime unto death to meet and read the declaration of human freedom."[99]

Here are two events on same day; two celebrations invoking the same document; two evocations of a revolutionary past unto two wildly different ends. There is something about 1776 that fueled the zeal on all sides of the conflict leading up to compromise. Something that went much deeper than a matter of common heritage.

The American fascination with 1776 is not because of independence but revolution. For it was revolution that necessitated independence—or more accurately, separation and breakage from the past. As Hannah Arendt points out, prior to the American Revolution, the Western phenomenon of revolution was about restoration; at its root, *revolvere* permits a turning back, a revolving or rolling back to what came before.[100] When tensions flared between the colonists and the British—and mostly around issues of economic regulation—the American colonists came to see these policies, and the Old World in general, its government, and its traditions as restricting to the boundless potential of the New World. The face of tyranny took the form of the past, reaching across the Atlantic, encroaching upon life in the colonies. The revolutionary project America engaged was not only one to overthrow tyranny, both real and perceived. Revolution represented a break from the past that would permit political and economic independence as well as social, cultural, and ideological separation. Severance would accomplish two ends critical to the kind of independence America sought. One, an American triumph would mean that British influence on the development of American cultural and national identity would be completely vanquished. Theoretically, intransigence in war meant intransigence in victory: newfound American sovereignty would not be compromised by the opposition. Two, separation from what Britain represented gave definition to what freedom could mean. If the Old World and tradition were tyrannical, then territories of the New World and charting one's own course in the vast unknown symbolized freedom.

As the cry for liberty justified the revolution of separation, it also presented significant challenges for a young America. Freedom was the rallying force during the war, uniting a motley crew of colonies against the encroaching tyranny of a common British enemy. But what was freedom beyond its revolutionary banner? Without the threat of external imposition, what would keep the nation together internally? The issue of national unification went beyond the scope of America's revolutionary idealism. The same freedom that brought America to the promised land of independence and sovereignty, also left a fledgling republic ill-equipped to exist in that land. Within three years of the Treaty of Paris, George Washington laments the role of government in protecting liberty and property of its citizens in response to news about Daniel Shays' rebellion against the Massachusetts government in late 1786.[101] Although Shays Rebellion was a short-lived and

unsuccessful agrarian uprising, it reverberated around the republic and is regarded as one of the more significant events to prompt the abdication of the idealistic and impractical Articles of Confederation for the Constitution of the United States. On a more ideological plane, the rebellion represented the very precariousness of liberty as a revolutionary ideal. Notwithstanding that Daniel Shays was an American veteran in the War for Independence and that his motivation for taking up arms against Massachusetts was little different than how he understood the colonists' united efforts against British policy, Shays was immediately identified as a threat to America's newfound freedom. The tenets of liberty that justified revolution could not be universally invoked. For the first time since independence, the question of who gets to raise the banner of liberty became a national issue affecting the livelihood of free white people. Three years into its republic, America was face to face with its hubris, the ambition of no restraint, the very problem of negative freedom. The unbridled liberty of the wealthy infringed on the possibility of that same liberty for the impoverished. Shays Rebellion restaged the war for freedom on the battlefield of interests—except Shays and his companions did not find justification in their cry for liberty. Rather than bring unification, the freedom cry threatened to splinter America. At best, freedom was a vague ideal, open to selective interpretation. Nevertheless, this revolutionary fervor for freedom became the bedrock of American values and principles and a fixture in the mouths and hearts of the American public.

Despite its increasingly indeterminate and conflicting invocations, the freedom ideal nonetheless became ingrained as a fundamental component of America's national character. Not only did the cry for freedom beget the political sovereignty of the American republic, it also swaddled and molded an incipient national consciousness. The triumvirate of revolution, freedom, and sovereignty branded America's collective memory of its independence; it rested in the very heartbeat of national identity and became the rally cry whenever there emerged a perceived threat of encroaching tyranny. At the level of national consciousness, the far too easily mythologized memory of independence would inform the hope of what America could be and justify what it could do. As a result of the constant evocations of a national memory under steady revision, the ideal of freedom is repeatedly reconstructed for metonymic use. Particularly during moments of physical or ideological contention, freedom is made to stand in for sovereignty, or democracy, or the protection of rights, or the pursuit of wealth, or the act of revolt, or even the imperialistic acquisition of lands, peoples, and resources. This multiply-metonymic use of freedom gives concrete association to a persistently nebulous ideal. While these sometimes vastly divergent associations further complicated the meaning of freedom, the metonymy of freedom translated the loosely defined ideal into something real, something to be possessed. Moreover, the physical presence of chattel slavery and its centrality in the economic and social development of American independence gave freedom corporality in a way no metonym could. The display of the physical enslavement and subservience of Africans in public spaces, in homes, and even in the rearing of children made freedom more than a notion lauded in the American consciousness. Freedom became a visibly manifested right that blacks did not and arguably could not possess; it was a physical state of being that neither God nor nature nor science nor economic growth and security could allow to extend to the sable race. The indispensability of slavery was so embedded in the national consciousness that American identity and its ideal of freedom both congealed around whiteness. In the national memory, to be American meant to resist tyranny as metaphor for

slavery. To be American is to be free, and to be free was visually and physically embodied in the white man. Together, freedom's metonymies and the forces of slavery and whiteness led to increasing social and political unification. Nevertheless, at its root, the revolutionary ideal of freedom did more to bring division than unity. This kind of freedom birthed a nation whose heart beat not for peace but for victory, the resolution that must come from war.

After eighty years since the War for Independence and five separate occasions where secession threatened to split up the nation, civil war erupted between the North and the South, with each side fighting in the name of the great freedom ideal.[102] Dubbed the Second American Revolution, the Civil War became what C. Van Woodward would call "the clash between 'right' on the side of the North and 'rights' on the side of the South."[103] The claim for what is right sought to hold America to the idealism of its principles: free labor, free soil, and the moral responsibility to extend the right to freedom to African Americans. Conversely, the claims for rights argued that American independence was premised on the sovereignty of the states: the tradition of freedom in America came through the protection of states' rights, the safeguard against federal tyranny. Both positions laid claim to the same revolutionary ideal of freedom but interpretations of the meaning and implications of that freedom differed between sides. Similar to the American Revolution, the conflict between 'right' and 'rights' became a matter of warring principles, a contest to be resolved only by the unequivocal defeat of one over the other. Consequently, the conclusion of the Civil War that came by way of Union victory did not bring peace but continued strife. Both North and South held onto the revolutionary ideal of freedom that figured so prominently in national memory and identity, allowing for tensions to persist for over another ten years after the war. In this regard, while Appomattox represented the end of war, it did not represent the end of disunion. Ironically enough, the project to reconstruct the nation effectively worked in the service of continuing, even exacerbating civil strife.

Radical Reconstruction sought to answer Lincoln's call in Gettysburg to rebuild the nation but it failed to imagine a new birth of freedom. The problem with Andrew Johnson's plan for reunification was that it made allowance for the easy readmittance of the South. Radical Republicans feared Southern rebels had not yet done penance for its transgressions against the Union. The nation would too easily relapse into the way it was prior to the war. In the tradition of American revolution, the project of building the new required a break from the past. Not only would this mean the reconstitution of the political balance of power but also the complete defeat of the rebel South. The economic strength of the South was vanquished with the abolition of the slavery; politically, ex-Confederate states were stripped of their sovereignty as Republicans set up military protected puppet governments throughout the South. Arguably, even more than these, the most notable and visible sign of the break from the past is the racial reorientation of the South created as a result of the radical program's political and economic interests.

Radical Reconstruction intended to defeat the remnants of antebellum Southern might by remaking the South in the name of free citizenry, free labor, and the free market. For all intents and purposes, Republicans sought to accomplish this reconstruction by exercising full political control over the South. The abolition of slavery provided what Republicans saw as an opportunity to build a party stronghold in the ex-Confederacy, as some four million African Americans transitioned from being enslaved to being free men

and women. By extending citizenship and the suffrage to freed blacks, Republicans banked on using their political advantage to remake the South without significant Democratic opposition. As Southern public sentiment decried, there was nothing that could represent more the humiliation and defeat of the Old South than the image of an enfranchised freed black, ruling over the political affairs of the white South. Nothing indicated a break from the past more than the legislation abolishing the economic and cultural bases of American prosperity and identity, declaring freed men and women citizens, and vesting the newly emancipated with the political power of participatory citizenship. But this departure from the racially-oriented political factionalism of the past did not lead to the establishment of a more unified nation. In fact, Northern and Republican attempts to dominate the South further antagonized political discord and placed sectional tensions under increasing duress.

The problem with the radical Republicans' attempt to employ revolutionary tactics to rebuild a free nation is that they reduced Reconstruction to a matter of political control. The abolition of slavery threw the nation into an intensely fragile economic state and it fundamentally changed the social landscape of the nation. The emancipation of four million African Americans created the largest racial upheaval in national history which, in effect, created crises in the practical realities of everyday living and in the American national consciousness. Free labor, political alliances, social hierarchies, and municipal law needed to be redefined; likewise, the meaning of democracy, cultural identity, race, equality, and citizenship all needed to be recalibrated. Disarray characterized postwar America. Building a unified nation would require attending to the causes of the social and economic turmoil of the day as well as the larger ideological tremors that shook the nation. Instead, Reconstruction's radical agenda was too shortsighted in its scope and approach. And this was not unknown. As Keith Polakoff argues, Republicans themselves knew their plans for Reconstruction were at best a forlorn hope. He says, "Reconstruction was basically a social and economic problem. The Republicans, unsure how to handle the South's racism and too conservative to deal effectively with the section's poverty, proposed instead a political solution. Manhood suffrage became almost a panacea for them. They soon learned, however, how easily an impoverished and despised minority could be cheated out of political rights."[104] Not only was the hope in making the suffrage a panacea of sorts myopic and insufficient to rectify the issues plaguing the South, but the style of Reconstruction's attempted political revolution deepened national factions by disturbing tensions contained by the system of slavery.

When combining the rhetoric of revolutionary idealism with rights as a metonym for freedom—be it citizenship rights, the suffrage, or property rights—the outcome is always freedom against tyranny. The Republican moral campaign for black civil rights sought to wage war against the tyranny of slavery and its effects. Radical abolitionists have long proselytized that the racial logic supporting slavery would corrode the democratic foundation of American values in the sight of God and the law. The North long feared the tyranny of slavery as an institution, particularly for its capacity to establish Southern political dominance and frustrate the business of Northern industry. The South's disdain for Reconstruction and anxiety over the prospects of "Negro control" attest to their own deep-seeded fears of tyrannical oppression. For different reasons, both the North and the South fell back to the defining moment for American national consciousness: the determination to resist tyranny and declare independence from the intolerable. But, as

becoming of political irony, both factions looked back to the glory of revolutionary war in hopes of rallying the spirit of national unity. Instead, they created greater political discord, further splintering the nation.

The occasion of the nation's anniversary impacted the centennial moment in two ways. On one hand, it celebrated the birth of a national consciousness that congealed around ideals of freedom and democracy. On the other hand, it triggered a traumatic association between political opposition and tyranny. The problem is that the interpretation and uptake of these ideals vary widely and that tyranny is subjectively constructed. As a result, while evocations of the revolutionary moment were intended to arouse sentiments of national unity, they instead elicited skepticism, accusations, and anxiety. What made ideals of freedom and constructions of tyranny work in the eighteenth century and not in the nineteenth century is that the colonists, despite their sectional differences, were able to construct a common foe in the British empire. During Reconstruction, there was no singular enemy. The political and ideological shuffling that took place during Reconstruction upended the national consciousness in such a way that lines of political allegiance were reconfigured and constructions of who exactly is the enemy became increasingly various. In this moment, it was not uncommon to see men like George Julian: an early Republican who opposed slavery, mistrusted Lincoln's idea of emancipation because of its reservations about racial coexistence, despised Lincoln's and Johnson's reconstruction policies as too lenient, supported the radicals in Reconstruction, and then would viscerally oppose Republicanism under Grant and run for vice-president under the Liberal Republican campaign in 1872—which happened to share the same candidates and platform as the Democratic Party. For Julian, the cause to protect the freedom and rights of black Americans now became a stumbling block for national fraternity and reunion. His opinion of the will of the people of the South also changed. Prior to the suffrage, Julian saw the "ex-rebels" as a threat to the safety of society, "smarting under the humiliation of their failure, and making the condition of the freedmen more intolerable than slavery itself, through local laws and police regulations."[105] But by 1876, Julian appealed to public opinion to dethrone the radical purpose arguing, "A century ago our fathers took up arms in defense of their right to a voice in the government which dealt with their liberty, their property and their lives. We assert the same right now when we ask that the will of the people be registered as the supreme law, and that whoever may defy it by overt acts shall receive the same treatment which the nation awarded to the men who appealed from the ballot to the bayonet in 1861."[106] As Julian's political interests began to change, so did the way he thought about what—or rather who—stood in the way of a new and unified nation.

The changing political landscape of the moment coincided with a host of other forces impacting the national consciousness during the 1870s. The South's insistence on "home rule" converged with high profits the Northern industry experienced in the South as the Gilded Age began to make headway. As Rutherford Hayes would later explain, "As long as discontent with the Government and with their fellow citizens of the North existed in the Southern states, we all know that politics would receive more attention than business."[107] And for Hayes, business—or rather, prosperity—was the key to national unity. So long as race relations was a matter of politics, it would require the attention of the law and federal enforcement; it could not be as it once was—a private matter of social relations, as personal

as prejudice or morality. North and South began to see the Southern black masses as a common handicap. Economic and political interests assuaged the rhetoric of belligerent antagonism to appeals for magnanimity and fraternity. Whether it was a result of persuasion, distraction, or abdication, the idealistic bearings of the national consciousness settled into a fatigue over the race question, leading to a willful allowance to abandon the case of African Americans.

This matter of racial fatigue is quite peculiar, especially as it concerns the ways in which the meanings of freedom for black Americans and for the nation at large were shifting during the events of compromise. What is particularly of interest is the way this fatigue affected those who have long been supporters of liberty and rights for black Americans. Horace Greeley, founder and editor or the *New York Tribune*, the former radical abolitionist who criticized Lincoln for not executing the emancipating provisions of the Confiscation Acts, would run for president against Grant in the 1872 elections, endorsed by the new Liberal Republican and the Democratic parties. Greeley had become a crusader for sectional reunion and he built a campaign platform that, amongst other things, was distinctly against Grant and against Reconstruction. He believed what was needed for union between North and South was communication and understanding; as it concerned the racial problems that have long divided the nation he says, "the past is past […] I am weary of fighting over issues that ought to be dead."[108] But Greeley could not campaign on weariness. The watchword would be reconciliation.

Charles Sumner, longstanding radical Republican whose career is defined by his adamant fight for black civil rights and black social equality, regarded as the "purest and best friend of our race"; he, too, confessed his anxiousness for reconciliation. When asked by a group of prominent black citizens of Washington D.C. for his counsel on the 1872 presidential election, Sumner strongly endorsed Greeley. He cited reasons mostly related to his political disagreements and frustrations with Grant and Greeley being a "lifetime abolitionist" who will show always "the most heartfelt sympathy and the greatest vigor" as it concerns black protection and advancement.[109] On the topic of reconciliation, Sumner writes: "Most anxiously I have looked for the time, which seems now at hand, when there should be reconciliation, not only between the North and South, but between the two races, so that the two sections and the two races may be lifted from the ruts and grooves in which they are now fastened and, instead of *irritating antagonism* without end, there shall be *sympathetic coöperation*. […] To this end there must be Reconciliation. Nor can I withhold my hand. Freely I accept the hand that is offered, and reach forth my own in friendly grasp. I am against the policy of hate; I am against fanning ancient flames into continued life; I am against raking the ashes of the Past for coals of fire yet burning. Pile up the ashes; extinguish the flames; abolish the hate!"

Greeley would lose the election but his campaign, Sumner's endorsement, and the Liberal Republican party provided a way of thinking about reunion that would be a critical component of compromise the following election. Reconstruction was the problem that kept the nation divided. Reconciliation (and not resolution) would come by leaving the past in the past, by piling up the ashes and extinguishing the flames, by moving on from Reconstruction. Be it weariness or anxiousness, this was the expression of a desire to not only to have Reconstruction be a memory but to leave Reconstruction out of memory

altogether. This became the meaning of reconciliation. This became what allies to black civil rights and racial equality would consider the pathway to peace.

When Douglass delivers his 1875 Independence Day address, he was already keen to reading declarations of peace as cries of exhaustion. He knew compromise was near, that Reconstruction would soon be abandoned and, with it, the protections and support of black political and civil rights. This is the topic of his speech, the color question of the day:

> when this great white race has renewed its vows of patriotism and flowed back into its accustomed channels, the question for us is: in what position will this stupendous reconciliation leave the colored people? What tendencies will spring out of it, and how will they affect us? If war among the whites brought peace and liberty to the blacks, what will peace among the whites bring? Has justice so deep a hold upon the nation, has reconstruction of the basis of liberty and equality become so strong that the rushing together of these mighty waves will not disturb its foundations? These questions, my friends, make me thoughtful. The signs of the times are not all in our favor.[110]

In response, Douglass proposes a black nationalist turn. He calls for great men "of our own color in whom we may well believe"; he calls for a "grand organ which is peculiarly and distinctively our own," a banner to be hung high "so that it may be seen and read of all men, than [sic] the colored race is capable of living more than a life of absolute dependence, and can think and speak for itself."[111] Finally, he delivers a declaration of independence on behalf of the race to those benevolent societies that cause more injury to the race than benefit by maintaining in the public mind the image of the "poor, wretched negro" for the sake of the society's profit. He advocates a black self-reliance and group uplift that both proves black Americans are "no longer slaves but freemen; no longer subjects, but citizens, and have a voice and vote with all other citizens" and an indication of "desirable progress" and "independent welfare…of their own independent and earnest efforts."[112] As his revision of the Declaration of Independence demonstrates, Douglass' black nationalist agenda is one that seeks to transform the abstract idealism of freedom into a practical politics moving toward the protection, exercise, and recognition of black rights and black life as equal to those of the founding fathers' descendants.

Douglass' project should be met with restrained optimism and studied skepticism. Especially in light of what radical Reconstruction failed to do, to what end can Douglass proposed turn to the revolutionary ideals of 1776 weather the storm of the great racial Nadir? How does one work toward such a project? Is it possible for the same ideal of freedom that instigated the failure of emancipation and Reconstruction for the freedman to also be a beacon of hope, the promise to which black Americans cleave to in the struggle for social and political equality and human dignity? At issue here is the accessibility and applicability of universality for black Americans, particularly as it relates to American liberal discourses of freedom. In the postbellum American world, the meaning of freedom became increasingly narrow, even as the rhetoric of independence, citizenship, and enfranchisement is extended to freedpersons. This is the tension black Americans felt in their post-abolition "freedom": universality is not universal.[113] For black Americans, this postbellum, post-Reconstruction world became increasingly characterized by the chasm between the abstract promise of freedom and the practical, lived exercise of being free.

What is interesting are the ways black leaders sought to reconcile this political and practical discord. This project of reconciliation would disavow neither the idealism of universality or the reality of increasingly abject black life; instead, this project would embrace both the promise of a universal freedom and the experience of the subjected black body. Can such universal ideals be transformed? Can the work these universal principles do be appropriated in the service of black freedom struggles? Is it possible for the idealism of universality to be a practical warranty to guarantee the materiality of everyday life? This becomes the project for a modern black politics, or a black political modernity that emerges in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter Three

FREEDOM IN COMPROMISE

Up From Slavery is by far Booker T. Washington's most popular work, both in his day and in our contemporary awareness of Washington as a significant historical figure. While some of the text's critical and commercial success came by way of Washington being hailed successor to Frederick Douglass and the most important black leader of his time, my angle here is to show that the text was as praised as it was because of the charismatic work it performed. *Up From Slavery* is a narrative. Its autobiographical account of Washington's life became the most read post-Civil War slave narrative in America. But *Up From Slavery* is not only a narrative about Washington; it is a narrative about the South and black life in the South—about the legacy of slavery, what it means to be free, and what a white audience should know about the black populace in the South. At the turn of the twentieth century, this kind of narrative would be legible on multiple different registers. *Up From Slavery* is an interracial text, written for Washington's growing Northern philanthropic and Southern industrialist white readership, and to literate and soon to be literate blacks in the South. It is a manual for black uplift, an educational credo, treatise on manners, fundraising tool, public speaking guide, and autobiographical self-help book.

The breadth of *Up From Slavery*'s influence was not accomplished because Washington's life up to that point was so exceptional it could simultaneously impress Yankee liberals, Southern conservatives, the black elite, and masses of black laypeople. Rather, it was because of what Louis Harlan dubs Washington's "wizardry"—his ability to repurpose himself, play different roles, and wear different masks in order to appeal to multiple audiences and create a common ground between them. Like Washington, *Up From Slavery* is a text that jumps Jim Crow. As a slave narrative and an industrialist success story, it is a text that functions as a tool to broker mutuality between the exploited and the exploiters. This is the charismatic performance of the text: *Up From Slavery* is a political fiction about racial progress in the American South. Washington creates this common ground by redefining freedom, slavery, labor, rights, education, politics, compromise, and advancement in ways idealistically recognizable to his target audiences, North, South, black, and white.[114]

For my purposes here, I want to focus on three specific chapters: "A Slave Among Slaves," "Boyhood Days," and "The Reconstruction Period." As the first, second, and fifth chapters in *Up From Slavery*, Washington provides the narrative background informing the program for freedom he proposes for black Americans.[115] Three elements, which are loosely based on these chapters, are critical to understanding how Washington perceives what freedom means at the dawn of the twentieth century and how he develops his own ideal of freedom for the black Southern masses. "The Reconstruction Period" provides context: here Washington describes the world black people inhabit as he sees it. This is the world he, as leader, inherits. "A Slave Among Slaves" reveals Washington's idealism—or, rather, the appeal of idealism for Washington as he works to establish his position as leader.

Finally, "Boyhood Days" demonstrates compromise—how Washington attempts to reconcile his investments in the universal and ideal with the lived realities of black life. While these chapters are written as narrative recollections of his own life, Washington uses them to revise the past and present of Southern race relations, propose his version of proper black leadership, and place the many lives of freed black Southerners at the feet of the universal law of merit. My reading of these chapters will diverge from the chronology in which they appear in *Up From Slavery* and follow my arrangement of these organizational elements, in order to trace the ways context lends itself to the allure of idealism, and the ways this idealism begets compromise.

"The Reconstruction Period" is the first chapter that Washington does not write as personal account of his life. Rather, he writes from the perspective of what he remembers noticing during the time, explaining scenarios he witnesses but that are not his own experiences. With this narrative distance, Washington describes the world around him, separating the sentiments of others during and about the period from his own. Rhetorically, Washington positions himself as in the world of Reconstruction but not of that world. To address Reconstruction is critical for Washington: he received his education and came of age during these years, and without question Reconstruction shaped what it meant for him to be black and freed. Also, as Washington rose in stature as a race leader, he had to contend with the legacy of Reconstruction, including: the impact of its failure in the minds of black and white Southerners, disfranchisement, racial terror, Jim Crow segregation, and continued and unprotected economic exploitation. Washington needed to describe this world, not only as he saw it in his youth but also at the time of writing *Up From Slavery*, and he needed to do so in a way that would alienate neither his southern conservative audience, his northern liberal audience, nor his audience of black allies and supporters.

Washington opens the chapter:

> During the whole of the Reconstruction period two ideas were constantly agitating the minds of the coloured people, or, at least, the minds of a large part of the race. One of these was the craze for Greek and Latin learning, and the other was a desire to hold office. It could not have been expected that a people who had spent generations in slavery, and before that generations in the darkest heathenism, could at first form any proper conception of what an education meant. […] The ambition to secure an education was most praiseworthy and encouraging. The idea, however was too prevalent that, as soon as one secured a little education, in some unexplainable way he would be free from most of the hardships of the world, and, at any rate, could live without manual labour. There was a further feeling that a knowledge, however little, of the Greek and Latin languages would make one a very superior being, something bordering almost on the supernatural.[116]

Washington's language in this opening sequence is significant because it frames how he presents to his white readership what Reconstruction was in the black mind. These two ideas—the "craze for Greek and Latin learning" and the "desire to hold office"—were "constant agitators," disturbances that both troubled and aroused the minds of black Southerners. If Reconstruction was perceived in the white South as something external, a

foreign presence occupying the territory of the South distorting what is natural, then Washington represents it as such for black people too. Black Southerners were also subject to Reconstruction's invasion, disturbance, and distortion.

The agitating ideas are not education and politics in general but the "craze" for an impractical education and a desire to hold political office without the knowledge or experience to do so. The issue is a matter of what is proper and what is practical. The idea of what is proper is central to Washington's observations; the standards measuring the progress of Western civilization are the same standards he applies to black life and practices in freedom. In this way, it is no contradiction for Washington to acknowledge the ambition for education amongst the young and old after slavery to be "most praiseworthy" and "encouraging" in one sentence, and to maintain that such an ambition is not to be expected of freed men and women in another. Benighted by generations in slavery and the "darkest heathenism" of Africa's alleged non-civilization, even the most praiseworthy ambition is tainted by this estrangement from what is proper. According to Washington, although black pursuit of education was encouraging, it lacked a sense of direction that Reconstruction did not provide. The absence of guidance characterizing Reconstruction allowed ambition to slide into craze; the inability to "form a proper conception" of what education meant gave way to "unexplainable" rationalities of superiority, supernaturalism, and life above hardships. Underlining Washington's claim here is that the occupation of the South during Reconstruction was not physical only. At the level of ideas, Reconstruction functioned much to the same effect, occupying the Southern black mind with impractical and unrealistic aspirations. In his representation of Reconstruction as a failed attempt to build a free interracial South, Washington can only see the freedman's misguided ambition to learn as leading to the proliferation of poorly trained, immoral, and ignorant teachers and preachers.[117] From his opening sequence on the period of Reconstruction, Washington describes a black South in need of leadership, training of the proper, and a reevaluation of labor and viable professions.

This particular reading of Washington's opening to his Reconstruction chapter goes against the grain of his public persona as overtly critical of the black masses.[118] But his praise of post-slavery black pursuits would not be without ambiguity. Washington's problem was that he attempted to please both white and black readers with a single text. As a result, even as he was strategic in choosing his words, he constantly ran the risk of self-contradiction.[119] More significantly, Washington's problem of audience is also a problem of ideational investment: where would Washington place his sympathy, his allegiance as he recounts that most contentious moment in Southern history? How could he simultaneously acknowledge the opportunities for black advancement deriving from Reconstruction and concede Reconstruction as a failed intervention in Southern life? The image of the agitated black mind plays the line, uneasily accomplishing both objectives. On one hand, as I have attempted to show, Washington commends the freedman's effort for education despite his history of slavery. However, even this commendation is tempered with the claim that Reconstruction's poor guidance led this educational ambition astray. On the other hand, the failure of Reconstruction exacerbated an extant and generationally-enforced ignorance and incivility among black Southerners, distracting them from proper and practical educational uplift. In either case, the "agitation" of Reconstruction functioned as a disturbance of what would have happened naturally.

By the time Washington addresses the role of the federal government in Reconstruction, what is "natural" is again thrown into relief, illustrating the challenge Washington faces as he attempts to entertain dual audiences. Washington says, "During the whole of the Reconstruction period our people throughout the South looked to the Federal Government for everything, very much as a child looks to its mother. This was not unnatural. The central government gave them freedom, and the whole Nation had been enriched from more than two centuries by the labour of the Negro."[120] Needless to say, this is a rather dangerous analogy for Washington to use, even if his purpose is to render a critique of Reconstruction. By way of Washingtonian ambiguity, this explanation of the relationship between freed blacks and the federal government functions as a sort of cover: it both obscures any agency freedmen and women performed from emancipation through Reconstruction and it attempts to shield the freedman from the blame of Reconstruction's failure and its aftermath. Again, this ambiguity in Washington's methods is not only a question of audience, it is also indicative of Washington working to resolve his own ideological conflicts. This becomes more apparent concerning the topic of naturalness, which shows up in Washington's loose descriptions of that which is "natural," "not unnatural," and "unnatural" about the Reconstruction period. Washington previously alludes to what is natural in his discussion of the "agitated mind" of the race. Black pursuit of education was praiseworthy beyond expectation until it became crazed, wildly non-normal, when the pursuit for "Greek or Latin" studies or the desire to hold political office began to preoccupy the minds of the freedmen. Interestingly enough, Washington's idea of what is natural does not preclude black exceptionalism; however, exceptionalism is to remain exceptional. Uplift for the masses of freed peoples is gradual, slow, and appropriate to their position in society. This agitation, encouraged by Reconstruction, disrupted the pace of gradualism in the black mind—which, as promulgated by Washington, is the natural way of thinking about individual and racial progress.

When Washington uses the analogy of the child looking to its mother to describe black Americans' relationship to the federal government during Reconstruction, he explains it as "not unnatural." But why go through the trouble of a double negative? In this case, what is "not unnatural" is not the same as what is "natural." The space between the two, however subtle, opens up a way of reading how Washington is trying to negotiate the popular beliefs of scientific racism at the time, his own ideas about uplift, and his criticism of the governmental failure to create a sustainable structure during Reconstruction to prepare the masses of freedmen for life as free citizens. While Washington does come dangerously close to reproducing prevailing claims of racial inferiority levied against black Americans, this analogy does not compare freed blacks and children. Rather, Washington compares the nature of the relationship between freed blacks and the federal government with the relationship between a child and a mother. Slippage between the two readings is enticing, almost easy, but to do so would obscure the ways Washington traverses, ever so gently, the snares of language and dominant racial beliefs. To read an analogy between black people and children would read Washington as ceding to monogenist scientific racism: that black men are from the same human race as white men but that they are not fully developed humans, making them fundamentally different from, and ultimately inferior to white people.[121] While Washington's ambiguity and highly stereotypical race jokes have encouraged readings treating his compliance to social segregation as an acquiescence to

social difference between the races, at no point did Washington go so far as to say that black people were inherently inferior to whites. What is clear, however, is that Washington believed the newly freed yet needed to mature into full citizenship stature, and the Reconstruction period did not provide the guidance vital to the maturity of the race. In this way, the difference between the races, at least immediately after slavery, was not that blacks were mentally and morally and socially stunted in comparison to the fully developed white man, as was believed by scientific racists and polite white sympathetics alike. Rather, this difference can be understood closer to what DuBois would later say, that "A people thus handicapped ought not to be asked to race with the world, but rather allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems."[122] The line of distinction between these positions is far too narrow; nonetheless, this is the line Washington walked as wizard, not only of Tuskegee but also of a modern black politics in an apologist New South.

While Washington's analogy is indeed legible to the racist sentiment of the day, beneath the surface its subtext is a critique of the federal government and its role in determining the nature of its relationship with freed black Americans. Despite what Washington previously mentions as "generations in slavery and before that generations in the darkest heathenism," the problem of the dependent "look" to the federal government is not the natural position assumed by black people in America. Rather, the problem of the look is the problem of the federal government's creation of and insistence on a dependent relationship with black bodies and their labor, in turn, supporting the assumption of an inherent child-like stature of the race. This continues a critique of slavery and emancipation Washington makes earlier in his narrative. He describes America as "entangled in the net of slavery," even as it was "recognized and protected for years by the General Government. Having once got its tentacles fasted on to the economic and social life of the Republic, it was no easy matter of the country to relieve itself of the institution."[123] For Washington, what makes this entanglement such a problem for the nation is that the machinery of slavery degraded the perception of the value of labor. "The slave system," he says, "in a large measure, took the spirit of self-reliance and self-help out of the white people. […] They unconsciously imbibed the feeling that manual labour was not the proper thing for them."[124] Slavery created a dependency on black labor sanctioned by the federal government. Consequently, national dependency on the exploitation of black bodies necessitated a regime of control premised on the physical and social suppression of black independence. But the dependent nature of the relationship between black Americans and the federal government did not cease when the institution of slavery was abolished. Rather, the government's role in the events of emancipation and Reconstruction furthered the maintenance of that dependency.

Washington's critique of emancipation is similar to his critique of Reconstruction in that he reads it as governmental imposition, a disruption in Southern black life. He describes the coming of emancipation as the coming of "the great responsibility of being free, of having charge of themselves, of having to think and plan for themselves and their children […] the great questions with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling for centuries had been thrown upon these people to be solved."[125] The news of emancipation brought "deep gloom" as the joy of freedom, although long awaited, was infiltrated by the burden of responsibility's sorrow. For Washington, when the central government "gave them freedom," it cast millions of freed blacks into a strange place among strange people,

unprepared, ill-equipped, with no chance to learn what it means to be free and how to be free. Granted, Washington's critique is severely limited because he does not acknowledge black agency in creating their own meanings of and spaces to practice freedom. Also, the question of preparation forecloses any recognition of the ways black proximity to and inclusion in Western civil society (if a slave society can be called a civil society) informed the structures of both black and white American social and cultural life. From Washington's perspective, emancipation could only be the authoritative dispensation of freedom by the federal government to the masses of enslaved blacks.

Washington's critique of emancipation is significant because it calls out the ways the history of the dependent relationship between the federal government and enslaved blacks informed Reconstruction's provisions in that Reconstruction offered no practical measures to ensure freed blacks would *not* have a dependent look to the federal government. The act of "giving" freedom functioned, in effect, more like a permission to be free—an allowance of a regulated supply of freedom from a central governmental source to masses of black people who would have no knowledge of freedom. Emancipation and abolition extended a regulated, conditional, and burdensome liberty. But the liberty given was never really theirs to possess. Black freedmen and women were given a freedom without independence. For Washington, this is what informs the nature of the relationship between blacks and the federal government during Reconstruction. And so, the "not unnatural" look in Washington's analogy resists claims of a natural or inherent inability for black Americans to exist in a free and white American society. The relationship between the two is already unnatural. The long history of institutional slavery disrupted the possibility of a natural relation in America between a free black man in possession of his inalienable rights and his government.[126] There is nothing natural about the black slave and slave labor nor about the relationship the government has with him. But with the history of exploitation, the mutually enervating dependence between blacks and whites characteristic of slavery, and the governmental policy to thrust emancipation onto the enslaved, where else would newly freed blacks turn for support post-slavery? In all of its non-naturalness, for freedmen and women to look to the federal government made sense—not because of natural black dependence but because of the ways the (political) history of slavery and emancipation cast the relationship between the two.

With this in mind, Washington writes perhaps the most direct criticism of the federal government in the chapter and arguably in the entire text. Three times Washington refers to a feeling that again entertains the question of what is natural. He says: "Even as a youth, and later in manhood, I had the feeling that it was cruelly wrong in the central government at the beginning of our freedom, to fail to make some provision for the general education of our people in addition to what the states might do, so that the people would be the better prepared for the duties of citizenship." Again: "Still as I look back now over the entire period of our freedom, I cannot help feeling that it would have been wiser if some plan could have been put in operation which would have made the possession of a certain amount of education or property, or both, a test for the exercise of the franchise, and a way provided by which this test should be made to apply honestly and squarely to both the white and black races." And yet again: "Though I was but little more than a youth during the period of Reconstruction, I had the feeling that mistakes were being made, and that things could not remain in the condition that they were in then very long."[127]

In the first passage, Washington describes the federal government's failure to make provisions for freedmen and women to be prepared for citizenship as "cruelly wrong," the same adjectival language he uses to describe the institution of slavery.[128] Cruelty and wrongness applied to the federal government's role both in the maintenance of slavery as well as in the advent of freedom. Washington's assessment, despite his attempt to pass it off as an opinionated feeling, sketches a critical continuity between slavery and freedom, particularly concerning governmental power towards the enslaved and the freed. If the cruelty and wrongness of slavery was in the suppression of the possibility for black people in America to develop as free subjects—possessors of the rights to one's own life, labor, and property—and in the distortion of a natural relationship with government, then the beginning of freedom is just as cruel and just as wrong. Washington's problem with the federal government's non-provisions is that it foreclosed support for freed blacks to be "prepared for the duties of citizenship." As Washington alludes in the second and third quoted passages, the failure to support black entrance into American citizenship was not only cruelly wrong but was also an unwise and erroneously structured policy. He goes on to say, "I felt that the Reconstruction policy, so far as it related to my race, was in a large measure on a false foundation, was artificial, and forced."[129] This mention of policy is significant in that it goes beyond Washington's previous general concern over what Reconstruction did not do and approaches the line of actual criticism about what Reconstruction did do. Without any discussion of policy particulars, the problem for Washington was with the foundation on which Reconstruction stood.

The version of freedom instituted by Reconstruction was premised on racial distortions of the past. The federal government's policy imposed a freedom that took for granted the long history of their unnatural relationship with black Americans, encouraged the exploitation of laboring black masses by failing to provide a plan for education and property ownership, instigated tensions between North and South by exploiting black Southerners as a source of political power, and ultimately kept freed black Americans from "natural" uplift with the distractions of impractical education and the desire to hold office. If there is anything Washington felt to be unnatural, it was this government enforced version of a freedom that subjected Southern black life to inappropriate crazes and sustained dependency. Without going so far as to say Reconstruction failed, Washington criticizes the federal government for implementing a false freedom, too quick in its optimism, too forced in its implementation. And the government's sins of omission toward freedmen made the legal extension of citizenship, political rights, and social equality artificial. Reconstruction policy was an attempt to rebuild a nation post slavery without addressing the attitudes, practices, and relationships cultivated during slavery.[130]

Naturalness is more than a thematic descriptor Washington uses in "The Reconstruction Period." Particularly as it concerns the federal government and the viability of Radical Reconstruction's policies, Washington offers only affective assessments, just what he feels at the time. By doing so, perhaps he is simply recounting his adolescent thoughts about Reconstruction rather than disclosing his thoughts on the matter from the authorial/authoritative position of leader of the race. Or perhaps it is to diminish to personal opinion what might be read as social and political criticism. Either way, Washington and his youthful feelings intuit problems with Reconstruction that are attributable to its failure. At this affective level, what felt unnatural to a young Washington

could pass as quasi-objective narration—Reconstruction through the eyes of a pre-adult, pre-education, pre-politics, pre-allegiance Washington. Rhetorically, personal reflection about what felt natural and unnatural to a teenager not caught in the craze could accomplish what direct political criticism would not. Ergo, naturalness is not only a rhetorical strategy Washington uses to walk the line discussing Reconstruction and its legacy, it is also the common ground between his Northern liberal and Southern conservative audiences. Washington's meditations on what is natural is not by chance, neither is it entirely a tactic claiming youthful naïveté to avoid involvement in political criticism. In the 1890s and through the turn of century, Social Darwinism dominated racial discourse, particularly as it concerned political rights, social equality, and what it meant to be a free and sovereign man in an evolving American civilization. In this way, what Washington says about the past of Reconstruction is also—if not more so—about the ways Reconstruction figures in the social and political thought of 1901.

"The Reconstruction Period" is abruptly different from the four preceding chapters and from every successive chapter in the narrative. It is the first and only chapter not anchored in autobiographical account of Washington's personal experiences. Particularly in chapters one through four, Washington identifies and explains specific events in his life, from which he deduces broader lessons for himself, for the race, and for the white South. In this fifth chapter, Washington is noticeably absent, replacing any discussion of himself with a discussion of the Reconstruction world. Although this chapter fits within the chronological progression of the narrative, its formal difference reveals a different time signature, that there is a different organizing temporal logic. "The Reconstruction Period" provides the historical context for not only the chapters after it but for the entirety of the *Up From Slavery* project. Washington's account of Reconstruction is not about chronicling the events between 1865 and 1877. Rather, for Washington to address Reconstruction is for him to address the Southern memory of the period. In other words, the significance of Reconstruction is in its legacy: the acrimony of racial tensions that would characterize the late nineteenth century came out of what Reconstruction attempted and failed to do. Washington's reflections are an effort to uncover the roots of the racial animus derivative of Reconstruction's failure. This is when and where the promise of emancipation failed, the freedman was politically abandoned and subjected to another system of free labor exploitation, the idea of a "New South" began to emerge, and the ideals of freedom and citizenship were reconstituted in the white political imagination. The image of the Southern world in this chapter is really a description of the beginnings of a world Washington later inherits as the proclaimed leader of the race.

According to Washington's reflections, the world Reconstruction produces is an unnatural world, shaped by the racial prejudice extending from slavery and a host of distortions accompanying the coming of freedom. As he "observes" in this chapter, the Reconstruction period disrupted a natural ambition for black Southern uplift, accentuated an unnatural relationship between the black masses and the federal government, and promulgated an unnatural policy for racial and Southern advancement. The Reconstruction period—and more specifically, the memory of the Reconstruction period—frames how Washington understands his world, the South he lives in and works to amend. Because of the centrality of Reconstruction, its failure, and its memory to the social and political climate of the South at the turn of the century, for Washington, the problems with black life and southern race relations are not derivative of slavery only, or even most importantly.

Rather, the race problems of the late nineteenth century come from the failures of the coming of freedom.

If emancipation and abolition took up the mantel of the revolutionary idealism behind 1776, then Reconstruction's demise paralleled the counterrevolutionary pragmatism of 1787. The vision of freedom and citizenship put forward by radical congressional Republicans became so unpopular amongst both Southern and Northern whites it was politically, economically, socially, and culturally untenable. Consequently, just as 1787 would see to the creation of a "We, the people"—a transformative moment in a nascent American identity—the abandonment of Reconstruction provided the occasion for a reconstituted American identity, imagined according to shifting ideologies of whiteness, liberalism, free labor, and masculinity. Black Southerners, who were declared free by an outmoded moralism and made citizen by way of perfunctory Reconstruction policy, no longer fit into the narrative of American freedom. Ironically, the means by which the federal government intended to legislate and protect the freedom and citizenship of black Americans provided the occasion for the redefinition of who is American and what his freedom look like in American cultural imagination, much to the dismay of freed black Americans. This is Washington's contextual point of departure. *Up From Slavery* is a project to make Southern freedmen and freedwomen legible to the revised and modern sensibilities of the twentieth century.

Washington's efforts to articulate a program of freedom for freed black Southerners and to define a modern black politics both serve the purpose of leading the Southern black masses to a position legible, as well as indispensable, to the reconstructed America emerging in the late nineteenth century. On one hand, we can look at the gospel of thrift, merit, and uplift espoused in *Up From Slavery* as the crux of this legibility project. And in many ways, it is. This Washingtonian gospel preaches the black becoming; its focus is on transforming freed men and women into being appropriately fit for the post-Reconstruction world and the beginning of the twentieth century. On another hand, there is another force driving this legibility project, one not propelled by forward transformation but retrograde revision. The legibility of the freed black Southern masses is not contingent on who they can become but on an appropriate understanding of who they were. In other words, for Washington, this post-Reconstruction project requires pre-Reconstruction revisions, particularly of slavery and emancipation. In this way, chapter five in the narrative functions as the contextual point of departure for *Up From Slavery* while the opening four chapters, specifically chapters one and two, are written in service of the revisionary work Washington hopes to accomplish. There is much at stake here: Washington's modern black politics, program for freedom, and legibility project all hang on this opening. Washington's revision attempts to change the *terms* of black legibility prior to the shifting narratives of freedom and citizenship that occurred during the Reconstruction period. The terms for black American inclusion into the national narrative of freedom and then citizenship during slavery and emancipation were overwhelmingly moral and political. Standing before God and the Constitution, they had a right to be free and for their freedom to be protected. With his revisions, Washington shifts the focus from claims based on the moral and political to claims based on merit and labor. Political moralism concerning race relations was defeated, broken and tossed aside by the pragmatism of politico-economic compromise. Washington's new terms, although no less ideal than political morality, would claim black inclusion by way of character, values befitting for nation building, and physical

resourcefulness. As Washington revises the experience of slavery and emancipation in his opening chapters, he is able to create a post-Reconstruction legible black subject that exists pre-Reconstruction. In this way, he does not have to antagonistically confront the memory of Reconstruction in the South. Instead, Washington is able to represent Reconstruction as disruptive for his version of the newly freed black populous as well. With the terms of legibility shifted, Washington can show retrospectively the ways black Southerners in the wake of slavery were already trying to uplift themselves according to late nineteenth century values.[131] But before Washington turns to the problem of the coming of freedom, he first addresses the problem of slavery.

Up From Slavery's first chapter, "A Slave Among Slaves," begins "I was born a slave on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. I am not quite sure of the exact place or exact date of my birth, but at any rate I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at some time."[132] Washington's opening is rather generic for slave narratives, as the attempt to recall the natal scene simultaneously lays claim to humanity through birth and acknowledges the subjection of that humanity to the system of slavery's ruptures. What is interesting about these opening two sentences is the speed with which Washington offers a contrastive conjunction in rejoinder to the uncertainty about his place and date of birth. Washington's quick and seemingly cavalier response, "I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at some time," immediately shifts the focus away from rupture and ontological uncertainty.[133] That slavery effaces the specificity of time and place matters little for Washington; his "at any rate" emphasizes he was born—time and place become incidental. Washington's revision of slavery begins with the revision of its effects on black life—or, at least, on his life specifically. He sidesteps the disorientation consequent of slavery by reinserting himself into his own natal scene, using his own suspicion to provide the certainty slavery denied him. Washington orients himself in himself. "A Slave Among Slaves" is the only chapter in the narrative where slavery is given direct attention but as the title suggests, the subject will be neither slavery nor the community of the enslaved. Washington's chronicle of slavery is about the reinserted man—about how a singular slave lived and observed the conditions that surround but do not define him.

Washington begins to describe his surroundings right away. In the chapter's second paragraph he writes: "My life had its beginning in the midst of the most miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings. This was so, however, not because my owners were especially cruel, for they were not, as compared with many others. I was born in a typical log cabin, about fourteen by sixteen feet square. In this cabin I lived with my mother and brother and sister till after the Civil War, when we were all declared free."[134] Curiously enough, while Washington alludes to a scene of misery and desolation, he does not appear to describe this scene, neither in this paragraph nor in the subsequent pages of the chapter. Where one would expect depictions of the horrors a child would witness in slavery, these remain absent from the text. However, over the course of the chapter Washington does tell of several trials he faced related to his surroundings growing up in slavery, beginning with the log cabin. Washington spends a great deal of time describing the particulars of the cabin, notably what the cabin lacked and how its deficiencies bore on his living conditions. Later Washington describes that he knew no time for sports or pastimes because labor occupied every day of his life. He received no schooling and described it as the denial of entrance into paradise. Washington laments the nonexistence of family values when he

reports that he cannot remember "a single instance…when our entire family sat down to the table together, and God's blessing was asked, and the family ate a meal in a civilized manner." Instead, children on the plantation got their meals, as he describes, "very much as dumb animals gather theirs." Lastly, Washington gives an account of his greatest trial: "The most trying ordeal that I was forced to endure as a slave boy, however, was the wearing of a flax shirt. […] I can scarcely imagine any torture, except, perhaps, the pulling of a tooth, that is equal to that caused by putting on a new flax shirt for the first time. […] Even to this day I can recall accurately the tortures that I underwent when putting on one of these garments. The fact that my flesh was soft and tender added to the pain. But I had no choice. I had to wear the flax shirt or none…"[135] It does seem rather peculiar that these accounts are the only ones Washington provides to explain his life in slavery.[136]

The experiences of sensationalized physical violence and mental agonies that commonly populate the pages of slave narratives are glaringly absent from Washington's recollections. Sure, this could perhaps be a writerly ploy to not offend an apologetic or guilt-ridden white readership. However, the question is not whether Washington experienced or witnessed or even heard about this kind of violence himself as a child. The question is what narrative about slavery becomes possible for Washington and his project with the omission of the incidents of slavery characteristic to pre-Civil War narratives? For one, his reader is given no other evidence, no other reason to believe that Washington's trials of necessity and condition are, in fact, the "miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings" he alludes to at the beginning of the chapter. The feature of "A Slave Among Slaves" is Washington himself and not slavery. As he works to situate himself as coming from the same place of enslavement as the Southern black masses, the focus is not on slavery and its evils but on one man and his understanding of his surroundings. Washington's omissions allow him to render a version of slavery as seen through a post-Reconstruction, late-nineteenth century prism of freedom. In other words, Washington's representation of slavery is a direct function of his freedom project. Slavery shows up in Washington's narrative only by way of freedom.

He writes, "So far as I can now recall, the first knowledge that I got of the fact that we were slaves, and that freedom of the slaves was being discussed, was early one morning before day, when I was awakened by my mother kneeling over her children and fervently praying that Lincoln and his armies might be successful, and that one day she and her children might be free."[137] Washington's awakening to the knowledge that he was enslaved came hand-in-hand entangled with the awareness that he would soon be free. The inverse of this statement also holds true: *it was his revelation of freedom on the horizon that introduced Washington to the world of slavery.* Washington's entrance into the realities of slavery did not come by way of death, transfer of property, division of family, or the spectacular scene of the blood-stained gate.[138] As a result, the misery and desolation of slavery for Washington would not be, and it could not be, the despair that comes by way of what Douglass describes as "that ever-gnawing and soul-devouring thought—'*I am a slave—a slave for life—a slave with no rational ground to hope for freedom…*"'[139] Instead, what makes the surroundings of slavery miserable and discouraging is its very proximity to freedom, and its denial and distortion of that freedom. Curiously enough, Washington's vision of freedom requires slavery. To be free is to ward off the ever-present, ever-encroaching deprivation of freedom. Slavery is whatever blocks the commencement of

freedom; this enslaving force has to be there or else freedom cannot be known. So, the path "up from slavery" is about the persistent weeding out, the constant restraint of everything Washington associates with slavery and its distortions. Consequently, and ironically, Washington's freedom project required the proximity of slavery and its vestiges so much so that the standards and idealism that informed Washington's vision of a free and practical life also confined and doomed black Southern masses to always only being proximate to freedom, on the soon-to-come side of the freedom horizon, perpetually ensnared in a distorted state of deprivation. His vision of freedom for the masses dooms the masses for the sake of how he constructs the image of the freedom ideal.

In Washington's revision of the past, the issue of slavery is not dehumanization but deprivation. The trials that Washington recounts experiencing as a child—the shabby log cabin home, having no sport or pastime, no schooling, not having meals together with his family, and the "torture" of roughshod clothing—are not grievances against his humanity but against what he, as an adult, would recognize as the values and baseline standards of a free liberal bourgeois society. The desire for respectable housing, family, schooling, and clothing was written into Washington's experience as an enslaved child although its fulfillment, and even its attempted practice, was refused, suffocated by the discouraging surroundings of slavery. This is significant because the project to retroactively construct a black subject in slavery who is yet legible to the late nineteenth century narrative of freedom requires not only the humanity of the enslaved but also the recognition of those values free and civilized peoples possess. As a slave among slaves, Washington writes himself as that legible black subject who rises from the masses, resists dehumanization, and struggles to hold onto his desire for free living. But the struggle Washington represents is neither his resistance to slavery nor his anticipation of freedom's coming. Rather, his struggle is to practice those Victorian virtues and Yankee values so esteemed in a liberal bourgeois society in the late nineteenth century. At every turn, the young Washington was frustrated because he could not live up to the standards he desired, standards which also happened to be regarded as appropriate for any Western free and civilized society. Washington's revision of slavery focuses on this struggle. This struggle goes beyond the event of emancipation and beyond the eventual abolition of chattel slavery. For Washington, it reads as though the true evil of slavery does not reside in the fact of its existence but in what slavery created. This is a struggle against the effects of deprivation, against the effects of miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings. Ultimately, this is a struggle against slavery's creation of victims.

In this chapter, Washington is careful not to place blame on any particular person or group of persons for the decisions they made under the duress of slavery. Twice in "A Slave Among Slaves," Washington describes how slavery creates victims: when he discusses his father and when he shares his earliest memory of his mother. Concerning his father Washington says, "Of my father I know even less than of my mother. I do not even know his name. I have heard reports to the effect that he was a white man who lived on one of the near-by plantations. Whoever he was, I never heard of his taking the least interest in me or providing in any way for my rearing. But I do not find especial fault with him. He was simply another unfortunate victim of the institution which the Nation unhappily had engrafted upon it at the time." Concerning his mother, Washington says, "One of my earliest recollections is that of my mother cooking a chicken late at night, and awakening her children for the purpose of feeding them. How or where she got it I do not know. I

presume, however, it was procured from our owner's farm. Some people may call this theft. If such a thing were to happen now, I should condemn it as theft myself. But taking place at the time it did, and for the reason that it did, no one could ever make me believe that my mother was guilty of thieving. She was simply a victim of the system of slavery."[140]

As victims of slavery, it was impossible for both the enslaved and the enslavers, for both blacks and whites to be able to live up to the standards of a free and civilized society. Slavery denied the practice of these standards, not by force but by perversion. Washington would write of the "harmful influences" of slavery on white people as it concerns the spirit of self-reliance and self-help as a result of the easy delegation of labor, trades, and productive industries to the enslaved.[141] Concerning enslaved blacks, the perversion functions rather differently. According to Washington, slavery created victims and that victimization allowed for the rationalization of an alternative morality, values and standards which were distorted and antagonistic to what he deemed as necessary and characteristic of a free society. As Washington's justification of his mother's stealing attests, because she was a victim to slavery, she operates by a different standard of moral economy.[142] If Washington's purpose in revising slavery is to retroactively create a narrative about black propensity for the values of post-Reconstruction freedom, then his struggle is against something he considers more nefarious and more "torturous" than the violent brutalities characterizing the institution of chattel slavery. The victimization and distortion slavery produce persist well beyond emancipation, marking black freed men and women as unbefitting of freedom because they fundamentally lack the sensibilities of civilization.

In "A Slave Among Slaves," Washington revises what slavery looks like (it is non-confrontational and nonviolent) and what counts as its torturous conditions. This sets up yet another revision. Who is the slave among slaves? What separates the singular 'slave' from the plural 'slaves'? How is it that this 'slave' is surrounded by 'slaves' and yet somehow not like them? Washington's accounts of his life in slavery are reconstructions of a certain kind of enslaved subjectivity—one that is not dehumanized, brutalized, and victimized by slavery. The trials of Washington's life in slavery show that, even then, he possessed bourgeois sensibilities and that he recognized the moral wrong of slavery was that it frustrated this sensibility and refused the practice of those standards considered appropriate for a free and civil society. To recall and reconstruct his life in this way, Washington revises the image of the enslaved in national memory at the turn of century by offering another possibility for who is and what it means to be made a slave. Washington rewrites image of the slave as object by writing in the imaginative possibility of the black subject who is enslaved. The singular 'slave' is distinct from the larger community of 'slaves' in that he is an enslaved subject, different in that he is surrounded by slavery but not marked by it. This is the goal of Washington's post-Reconstruction project to revise slavery: to show that beneath the victimhood and distortions created by slavery is a free black subject, as evidenced by his own life as a slave.

This opening chapter and its title is also clear in introducing the inextricability between Washington's vision of black progress and the promotion of his public image for the sake of his personal goals and claim to power. The subject of the chapter is autobiographical; it is an account of Washington's life growing up in slavery. It matters not that Washington knew slavery for only the first nine years of his life or that he did not

experience the brutalities of the institution characteristically recounted in the slave narrative genre. However, what does matter is that Washington is able to lay claim to an origin in slavery. The goal is two fold. One, the lower, more debased, more abject Washington depicts his origins, the more pronounced his success becomes, marking the depths from which he is able to ascend. Two, to be born in slavery and to be socialized into the slave system establishes Washington's authenticity as leader of the race. Preceding DuBois' famous critique of Washington's legitimacy as leader in "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" by nearly two years, Washington makes the case that his legitimacy is grounded in him being recognizable to the black masses because he comes from the masses.[143]

Authenticity established, the separation created in the chapter title introduces Washington to his audience as a singular difference—one born in slavery but not bearing the mark of slavery, one who is of the race but distinguishable from the masses. For Washington, it is critical he embodies this distinction for in it, he provides both a new type of race leader as well as a safe and comfortable distance between his white audience and the problem of slavery and its legacy. These two offerings go hand in hand, evident in the ways Washington describes what sets him apart from Douglass, the preceding unequivocal leader of black Americans. As Washington saw it, "While the old abolitionist had defended the race during slavery days, that long bitter struggle did not equip him for the task of leading the race once slavery was ended." The task ahead was to fit black Americans for the opportunities and responsibilities of freedom. This would require a different strategy than Douglass' and it needed time and cooperation from the white South. In his biography of Washington, Raymond Smock, co-editor of the *Booker T. Washington Papers* writes of this new style of leadership: "In his plan, there was no place for hatred or looking backward, or for the fiery vengeance of the abolitionists. Frederick Douglass had challenged the slave system and the government that supported it. He had sought the destruction of the slave system through moral outrage. The leaders of the abolition movement refused to compromise with slavery and the slaveholding South. But how, Washington asked, could freedom be assured once slavery had ended? Could it happen if the old hatreds and the old fears remained, or if black leaders concentrated on civil rights and political agitation without first getting an education and a job?" Washington's accommodating leadership sought cooperation over antagonism, saying, "we needed a policy, not of destruction, but of construction; not of defence, but of aggression; a policy, not of hostility or surrender, but of friendship and advance."[144]

Washington's leadership strategy, particularly his policy of friendship, is built on the cornerstone of recognition between the races. However, unlike the recognition DuBois would put forward in *Souls*, this kind is not about acknowledging the humanity of the other or coming to understand white and black as equal beings in a larger human brotherhood. Washingtonian recognition is premised on familiarity; it is about possessing a general knowledge not of the person on the other side of the racial divide but of the grounds where white and black can agree across that divide; it is about establishing terms of mutual interest. Washington's accommodationism was much more complex than an uneasy acquiescence to racial segregation. His friendship policy entailed more than forsaking political agitation. The strategy was revision. Washington's work was in making the case for black legibility. If whites North and South, liberal and conservative, can see blacks, and

recognize them as aspiring toward the same virtues and practicing the same values as they are, then that familiarity (plus a history of closeness and affiliation as a result of slavery) will lend itself to cooperation.[145] The success of this strategy depended on the black masses shouldering the burden to prove their legibility to liberal bourgeois sensibility, and Washington's charismatic leadership, making patient, supplicant intercession on behalf of the race. However, Washington's strategy would not lead to racial cooperation because the familiarity his charisma encouraged did not lead to participatory agreement with his project of racial advancement. Harlan describes this as one of the major flaws in Washington's politics of accommodation: "At the cost of some forcefulness of presentation, Washington did have a remarkable capacity to convince whites as well as blacks that he not only understood them but agreed with them. It is one of Washington's intangible qualities as a black leader that he could influence, if not lead, so many whites. The agreement that whites sensed in him was more in his manner than in his program or goals, which always included human rights as well as material advancement for blacks." More directly, he says, "A serious fault of this policy is that Washington usually appealed for white support on the basis of a vaguely conceived mutual interest rather than on ideological agreement."[146] But, perhaps, this is why Washington needed time. The process would be slow. Economic advancement would lead to acceptance by white dominant culture and full citizenship but only after familiarity and the common ground of mutual interest is established.

Black legibility as free subjects at the turn of the century was about the practice of bourgeois values. Washington's revision of slavery—or more aptly, of the slave in slavery—outlines an awareness of the values of freedom, the true barriers to that freedom, and the areas of focus for grabbing hold of freedom. Peter Coclanis writes of Washington's regard for such values: "Washington believed, first and foremost, that the 'values' of African Americans would have to change before such self-help was forthcoming. Actually, the word *values* is at once a misnomer and somewhat anachronistic, for what Washington, a Victorian man in the truest sense, was calling for was a turn to Victorian *virtues*. Indeed there is not much to distinguish Washingtonian virtues—hard work, sobriety, thrift, self-help, and self-discipline—from those promoted by the great moralists of the Victorian age, people such as Thomas Carlyle and, to a lesser extent, Samuel Smiles."[147] In his revisions of the past, if Washington could strip back the layers of slavery's surroundings and its creation of victims, then he could show the pathway leading up from slavery. The practice of these virtues are a more tangible and practical means, in contrast to abstract education and politics, for freed black Southerners to loose themselves from the narrative of their naturalized unfitness for freedom and prove they can pull themselves up from not only slavery but also from the victimization of slavery.

However, there is slippage between virtues and values that, in effect, undermine Washington's legibility project. Virtues in the classical sense connote permanence, standards of a perennial quality, not easily changed by the social winds of the day. It was not until the philosophical revolution of modernity, when morality was brought down from the heavens, relativized, and subjectified that virtues underwent its transmutation to values. What is significant here is that values brought with it the assumption that all moral ideas are relative and subjective, that they are peculiar to specific individuals and societies. Victorian scholar Gertrude Himmelfarb writes of this shift: "Values, as we now understand that word, do not have to be virtues; they can be beliefs, opinions, attitudes, feelings, habits,

conventions, preferences, prejudices, even idiosyncrasies—whatever any individual, group, or society happens to value, at any time, for any reason. One cannot say of virtues, as one can say of values, that anyone's virtues are as good as anyone else's, or that everyone has a right to his own virtues. Only values can lay that claim to moral equality and neutrality."[148] The problem for Washington lies within this shift from virtues to values. If, as Coclanis argues, Washington preached the pursuit of virtues, then Washington was after those qualities that are unchanging, moral standards with an eternal appeal and a recognizable universality. However, the turn of century values according to which he attempted to script black legibility were just that, values—customs, conventions, prejudices, informed by a history of racial slavery and white supremacy, influenced by the political, social, and economic failure of the racial equality project that was Reconstruction. In other words, while thrift, industriousness, and responsibility are elements of middle-class comportment, they are also racialized, the moral principles necessary to correct the inadequacies and vices of uncivilized freed men and women. But, it seems, Washington missed this slippage, the same way a vaguely conceived mutual interest and familiarity does not equate to racial cooperation and recognition.

Even in all of his emphasis on practical living and values promoting self-help, self-reliance, and industriousness, Washington's pathway to freedom is terribly idealistic. At issue here is not idealism itself—for there is something inherently ideal about the very belief in freedom, in its promise, possibility, and pursuit. At issue is what Washington's investment in this idealism both mortgages and forecloses for the black masses. The logic of Washington's revisionary project to construct the legible black subject is organized around the values of a moral economy in the service of the progress and supremacy of American civilization. As these values would be the terms for how the nation would advance up from slavery, they, too, would be the terms for black legibility in that advancement. By privileging bourgeois standards of living as the basis for life in freedom, Washington gives little consideration to the ways that race functioned as the living hand of slavery reaching into freedom. Race—or to be more specific, the recuperation of the subjection, exclusion, and domination of blackness—was the defining factor separating the free white subject and the freed black subject in American political and popular consciousness at the turn of the century. Additionally, in Washington's search for the free black subject prior to abolition, he finds him only through an altered and reconstructed version of slavery. Life as a slave, as seen through Washington's recollections of his childhood observations, has to be abstracted to the point where the true crime and torture of slavery is in the distortion and denial of bourgeois standards of living. The conditions of physical and psychological violence and its effects on the collective and individual black body and mind are written out for the sake of uncovering a particular kind of sentiment for freedom.

Washington's legibility project operates on two fronts: the appropriation of the popular ideas of civilization and progress from the present, and the revision of the memory of slavery and hope for freedom from the past. On both fronts, the Washingtonian vision of freedom that emerges is based on a brand of idealism constituted by, and even requiring, the economic exploitation and social exclusion of racialized blackness. Washington's investment in this idealism makes possible a way of reading black subjectivity in slavery—one that resists dehumanization, is not dependent on an externally conferred emancipation,

and that is concerned with a tangible freedom that can be made and protected by one's own hands. Conversely, it forecloses the extent to which the practice of and even the desire for home, family, and livelihood among enslaved blacks, as they are understood according to Western bourgeois standards, are frustrated, constrained, and regulated by the organizing logic of racialized bondage. The standards of bourgeois values on which Washington hoped do not stand as virtues, as principles in themselves; rather, they are built on and made possible by the racial exclusion and subjection of those who are made and who must remain illegible to those values.

Accompanying the idealism that Washington takes up is a claim for a universal pathway for American progress up from the degradations of slavery. The allure of universal principles of freedom open up alternative, even radical, possibilities for a people long denied the privilege of exercising freedom. But Washington's pursuit of the universal, as seen through his assessment of Reconstruction and his revision of slavery, requires an almost dismissive abstraction of the material realities of black life in slavery and freedom. Abstracting the conditions under which the black masses lived made it possible for Washington to claim that slavery was able to accomplish a larger and productive purpose for black Americans. Washington says: "notwithstanding the cruelty and moral wrong of slavery, the ten million Negroes inhabiting this country, who themselves or whose ancestors went through the school of American slavery, are in a stronger and more hopeful condition, materially, intellectually, morally, and religiously, than is true of an equal number of black people in any other portion of the globe." Continuing to make a case for the clichéd and problematic "school of slavery" argument, he goes on, "This I say, not to justify slavery…but to call attention to a fact, and to show how Providence so often uses men and institutions to accomplish a purpose."[149] Washington walks a fine line, attempting to testify about the strength of black American progress in a prejudiced land without justifying the conditions of enslavement they endured. For Washington, to gain from slavery, one must recognize and appropriate the material, intellectual, moral, and religious constitutions of a civilized people. Victims of slavery cannot gain from slavery. And so only a certain type of slave—one different from yet surrounded by the masses of others—is able to see the universal promise of freedom. In his idealism, Washington separates himself from the lived experiences of his people's enslaved past. But even in his efforts to introduce a pragmatic way of thinking about rising up from slavery, his emphasis on (bourgeois) practices is bound by the idealism that assumed universal principles and values alone determine a free and moral society. Additionally, Washington's desire to construct a legible black subject requires an erasure of the ways enslaved blacks endured and negotiated their lived conditions. As Washington revisits the struggles and aspirations of black life in slavery for his turn of the century audience, he chooses to revise this past only according to those bourgeois values and racial ideas promoted during his present. His omissions perform more than the exclusion of accounts of subjection and brutalization. They also indicate a kind of authorial and authoritative discharge, a sacrificial evacuation of those practices developed out of and in response to the material realities of Southern black life incongruous with Washington's turn of the century project. Washington's revisions of the past and construction of a legible black subject offers not redemption but compromise.

One of the things that made *Up From Slavery* so popular in its day is that it was a narrative explanation for freed blacks, the white South, and northern white industrialists

on how to rise above and beyond the legacy of slavery. Washington's understanding of the jaundiced race relations and the expanding discourse on the Negro problem captivating Southern affairs and the national imagination in the late nineteenth century was that it was borne out of the failures in the coming of freedom. The new configurations of freedom and citizenship emerging in the post-Reconstruction political imagination no longer acknowledged the legal and moral bases for black inclusion. If this is the context framing the world Washington inhabits at the turn of the century, then it becomes possible to read *Up From Slavery* also as a revisionary legibility project: using his life experiences and observations, Washington articulates a version of freedom for the freed black masses that does not derive from emancipation and Reconstruction and that can lead them to a position legible to the reconfigured America emerging at the turn of the century. In short, Washington's solution resides in the project to create a black subject legible to American bourgeois moral society and in his ability to demonstrate that this subject has existed since the advent of freedom. If "A Slave Among Slaves" proposes that such a subject—although singular and but a child—was present during slavery, then "Boyhood Days" would address how the perils of early freedom would challenge the development of a newly freed people. "Boyhood Days" is a critical chapter in that it accounts for the ways a reconstructed black subject ought to navigate a new, seemingly pernicious, and poorly orchestrated freedom.

Set at the beginning of freedom, "Boyhood Days" is a chapter of transitions. Of his personal life, Washington describes the challenges of leaving the plantation for the first time; confronting even poorer and morally debased living conditions in the salt-mining town Malden, West Virginia; his struggles to gain an education; difficulties socializing with other schoolchildren; and enduring dangerous and debilitating labor in the coal mines. Washington's recollections of his personal experiences and his reflections on the young Southern freed black boy's psyche command central attention in this chapter and provide a sort of coming-to-age narrative framework for this period of time. While the chapter quickly sketches roughly seven years of his life, the reader follows Washington from being enslaved to being freed, from child to young adult, and from youthful observer to social critic. This coming of age motif elevates the work of this chapter, metaphorically extending the subject in title "Boyhood Days" beyond Washington himself. In addition to Washington's own childhood, the chapter also focuses on the early days of freedom in the American South and on the freed black masses at the beginning of their lives after slavery. There is a claim being made here. Washington analogizes his youth with a young freedom and a newly freed race. But, as Washington emerges as the authorial leader-critic by the end of the chapter, his coming-of-age is not matched with a Southern or national expansion of freedom, or the advancement of freed black Southerners. Although Washington, freed black Southerners, and freedom by way of abolition were each in their "boyhood days," only Washington matures by the end of the chapter. This positions Washington, at least hypothetically, as a leader for both black Southerners and the former slaveholding South because he pioneers a path for uplift specific to the challenges facing the freed black masses and the American South. If indeed the race problems at the turn of the century are rooted in the coming of freedom, then these "boyhood days" is the opportune site for Washington to introduce his vision of a pragmatic freedom for an emergent race in a nascent freedom.[150] The revisionary goal of "A Slave Among Slaves" was to introduce black subjectivity as capable, and in some cases, already possessive of middle class values and

sensibilities. In "Boyhood Days," Washington moves on to issues of labor and the practice of bourgeois liberal economic rationality. The values he introduced in the previous chapter he now demonstrates in operation in his own life. The goal here is to build on the revisionary introduction of black subjectivity and to transform who Southern black freedmen are in the imagination of Washington's audience. The example of Washington's life and practice is purposed to turn the freed black masses into a body of economic-minded, industrious, and self-reliant individuals—a people in control of their labor; a people who understood the economic rationality at the intersection of self-interest, propriety, and prosperity; a people who are recognizable persons and not merely an undifferentiated mass to exploit.

In "Boyhood Days," Washington demonstrates that in his coming of age, he has made this transformation himself. In the arch of his narrative, Washington is a leader who emerges from among the people, matures in the post-abolition wilderness of Southern life, and develops a critical acumen that can lead a young South and an immature race out of its boyhood days of freedom. In this way, Washington's accounts of his own coming of age also suggest the means by which he proposes freed black Southerners can navigate their newfound living conditions so as to demonstrate a free black subjectivity fit for turn of the century American standards. However, as "Boyhood Days" introduces Washington's attention to material living conditions and the concrete practices necessary to shepherd freed black Southerners in a post-abolition South, it also reveals the ways compromise becomes an essential feature in his programmatic vision for freedom. The revisionary work of creating a free black subject at the dawn of emancipation who is also legible to post-Reconstruction American sensibilities requires reconciling idealistic principles with the constantly shifting realities facing black everyday life. However, such reconciliation does not come without cost. The felt life of black Americans—that sense of life in the feeling of being free, the life experienced through those practices that manufacture a feel of freedom, of sovereignty, of self despite the material conditions and practical realities facing freed black Southerners—is sacrificed as an offering, the collateral payment necessary to enter into the land of a universal freedom. This coming-of-age moment is critical for Washington and for freed black Southerners because this period could and would determine the kind of black subject that enters the twentieth century.

"Boyhood Days" is set primarily in Malden, West Virginia. Washington writes but a single paragraph about Malden but this little salt-mining town is instrumental in his developing vision of what a mature freedom should look like.[151] Malden was an economically depressed town, "right in the midst of the salt-furnaces," where blacks and whites labored and lived together. In some way or another, everyone in the town was connected to the salt business. Living conditions were crude, immoral practices were frequent, and the labor exacted the utmost amounts of time. Although Washington's stepfather, Wash Ferguson, was successful in securing work and a place for his family to live, Malden did not offer much contrast from what Washington depicts as life under slavery. Now off of the plantation, a young Washington finds that matters of housing, home, community, and labor are yet in ruinous disarray. He describes the cabin in Malden as being in worse condition than the slave quarters on the plantation; because there were no sanitary regulations in Malden, the filth was often intolerable; among his neighbors were the "poorest and most ignorant and degraded white people"; immorality including but apparently not limited to drinking, gambling, quarrels and fights were commonplace; and

he, even as a child, would often begin work at four o'clock in the morning. For Washington, life in Malden represented the hard living at the beginning of freedom for both freed black and poor white laborers. At this point in his autobiography, Washington has already built a narrative about freedom suggesting that abolition is an insufficient, or rather, incomplete, victory. To what end does emancipation serve, in itself, if the joy it brings is accompanied by gloom, burden, and responsibility? Is freedom enough when it looks like the dilapidation, ignorance, immorality, and exploitation characterizing Malden? Surely, the coming of freedom would mean the upheaval of Southern economy, labor relations, social relations, and state civic and political responsibilities. But when Washington writes of these boyhood days of freedom, he writes of a time when freed black people believed more in the abstract fancies of being free when the coming of freedom would require sobering practicality.

> Washington opens "Boyhood Days" with the following passage:
> After the coming of freedom there were two points upon which practically all the people on our place agreed, and I find that this was generally true throughout the South: that they must change their names, and that they must leave the old plantation for at least a few days or weeks in order that they might really feel sure that they were free.
> In some way a feeling got among the coloured people that it was far from proper for them to bear the surname of their former owners, and a great many of them took other surnames. This was one of the first signs of freedom. When they were slaves, a colored person was simply called "John" or "Susan." There was seldom occasion for more than the use of one name. If "John" or "Susan" belonged to a white man by the name of "Hatcher," sometimes he was called "John Hatcher," or as often "Hatcher's John." But there was a feeling that "John Hatcher" or "Hatcher's John" was not the proper title by which to denote a freeman; and so in many cases "John Hatcher" was changed to "John S. Lincoln" or "John S. Sherman," the initial "S" standing for no name, it was being simply a part of what the colored man proudly called his "entitles."
> As I have stated, most of the coloured people left the old planation for a short while at least, so as to be sure, it seemed, that they could leave and try their freedom on to see how it felt. After they had remained away for a time, many of the older slaves, especially, returned to their old homes and made some kind of contract with their former owners by which they remained on the estate.[152]

It is significant that Washington opens the chapter with this passage, before providing any autobiographical information about his experiences as a child in freedom. Considering the expanded figurative meaning of the chapter title, the leading subject implied in "Boyhood Days" is the object of Washington's critical gaze—not himself but an entire race of freedmen throughout the South. What constitutes their "boyhood" is a preoccupation with the *feeling* of being free. Washington describes the impetus to change names as "a feeling [that] got among the coloured people," and the motivation behind itinerancy as "try[ing] their

freedom on to see how it felt." For the authorial and practically-minded Washington, the performance of these practices to satisfy a feeling of being free is immature and indicative of "boyhood" sensibilities and an underdeveloped understanding of the newness of freedom. The path up from slavery requires a matured vision of freedom focused on the responsibilities of being free—such as addressing the great questions of civilization now thrust upon black Americans and the sordid conditions freed black Southerners endured in places like Malden and the coal-mining towns throughout the country. Here, the reader can recognize Washington's brand of pragmatic freedom taking shape.

Interestingly enough, Washington misses the ways the pursuit of the feeling of freedom is also quite pragmatic in form as practical actions in response to the physical, geographical, and social conditions and realities of life post-slavery. These practices place a physical demand on the legal declaration of abolition. The changing of names—which sometimes included initials that stood for no name at all—became a sign of freedom because it was a practice initiated by the formerly enslaved to identify themselves as free people. The nominal freedom granted with emancipation and abolition was made tangible in the embodied word of one's spoken and recorded identification. Additionally, this practice was a performance of a newly articulated propriety. Freedom provided the occasion for freed men and women to determine what is proper and improper as they transitioned from enslaved to freed. If, under slavery, black bodies were always already marked, constituted by its conscription into objecthood, then to change one's name is to lay claim to oneself and to one's subjectivity; it is an attempt to revise, as much as they could, the ontological past and future of their blackness, to rewrite the terms of their being, if for no one else but themselves and their networks according to their own sense of what is proper. This practice transformed a legal declaration of freedom—which was, at best, abstract in its application—to an embodied self-articulation of being free. Kimberly W. Benston writes of this practice: "Social and economic freedom—a truly new self—was incomplete if not authenticated by self-designation."[153] Similarly, the act of moving about away from the plantation, even if it were only temporary, is a performance of a newly understood agency. Because the plantation functioned as a system of confinement and slavery made fugitivity metonym for black mobility, itinerancy articulated an autonomy that declared independence from having to be accounted for, either as another's property or by some vouch-worthy free papers. Mobility requires no destination to be mobility. The act itself is an embodiment of freedom, a practice felt and performed, known only through experience. It is freedom enacted.[154] So, what Washington calls the general feelings that swept the South after abolition was a feeling for a practical freedom, one that needed to be somatic and sensational, one that had to be more than an event. Freedom had to be a sensation felt and understood through the physical senses, activated by and necessitating practice.

However for Washington, feelings toward freedom lacked the realistic practicality necessary for a newly freed race to mature to a free people. These practices in pursuit of the feeling of freedom lacked functionality. Name changes and itinerancy altered neither the living conditions freed blacks endured in the postbellum South nor the practical realities affecting everyday life. While "John S. Lincoln" might have been proud of his newly self-fashioned "entitles," Washington failed to see the substance in the change. That 'S' stood for no name at all meant that "John S. Lincoln," as a freedman, was preoccupied with

the appearance of a free status even as he lacked the knowledge of what that status meant. While Washington is subtle in calling this out as a problem, he later states more directly and much more vehemently that this gravitation toward status and appearance while lacking the necessary accompanying substance, is a hindrance to the advancement of the race.[155] "John S. Lincoln's" act was not unfounded but neither was it substantive. This pride in "entitles" was sophomoric at best but fitting for a young race in a young freedom. It is not difficult to surmise that Washington identifies "John S. Lincoln's" practice, rationale, and feeling as the boyhood roots to the image of the incompetent black politician that emerged during Reconstruction. Such a frivolous preoccupation with titles during the early days of freedom would, and did, become, for Washington, the much despised preoccupation with politics and status positions. The desire to move about did not fare any better in Washington's eyes. Leaving the places, people, and work opportunities they already knew in order to "try their freedom on to see how it felt" lacked purpose and did not address the new challenges to subsistence that freedom presented. Without direction and without destination, this wandering about to try on freedom was impractical because it seemingly abandoned both the concern for and the means to improve living conditions. So for Washington, these practices, based on the need to feel free, were the evidence proving that freed black Southerners needed a leader who could help them understand the new terrain of freedom and grow them up so as to refute the claims that black Americans were unprepared for freedom and illegible to the bourgeois standards of American civil society. Washington devotes the remainder of the chapter recounting his own boyhood experiences in Malden, setting in motion his coming of age and endorsing those principles he later discovers to be essential to the journey up from slavery to freedom.

Labor and education take center stage in Washington's recasting of his boyhood days in Malden. The abolition of slavery placed a demand on cheap labor, and the sobering necessity for survival pushed many freed black Southerners into menial labor to satisfy that demand. At the same time, the coming of freedom brought a widespread intensification of the desire for education among freed men and women. Washington's focus on labor and education in this chapter suggests that as these issues were the central concerns of the period for black Southerners, they were also critical to his own coming of age. The contention between labor and education was an issue Washington devoted the entirety of his public career addressing. How he writes about the seemingly antagonistic relation between the two during his formative years is, yet again, another opportunity for Washington to use his personal logic and experiences as an uplift model for the masses of freed black Southerners. What Washington shows is that both the challenges labor and education present as well as his responses to these challenges define his coming of age.

Once Washington leaves the plantation, he is no longer the child he was in slavery, shielded from the slave labor his older brother and peers had to perform. When Washington and his family arrive in Malden to join his Ferguson, he and his brother were immediately put to work at the salt-furnace, mostly to do the unskilled labor of packing salt.[156] Although he laments often having to begin work as early as four o'clock in the morning, Washington says nothing of his laboring nor of his attitude toward labor. At this point in the narrative, the only position about labor Washington puts forth is that it ought to be redeemed from the degrading connotations of slavery because labor lends itself to self-reliance and self-help, and it made the formerly enslaved almost fit for freedom.[157]

However, once a day school opens in Kanawha Valley, Washington begins to describe his attitude toward the necessity of labor differently. He says, "I had been working in a salt-furnace for several months, and my stepfather had discovered that I had financial value, and so, when the school opened, he decided that he could not spare me from my work. This decision seemed to cloud my every ambition. The disappointment was made all the more severe by reason of the fact that my place of work was where I could see the happy children passing to and from school, mornings and afternoons."[158] It seems as though Washington's change in attitude about labor takes place after, or as a result of, his stepfather's refusal to allow him to attend school. At stake here is much more than a child's disappointment. Washington is introduced to the larger problem of the continued compulsory management of black labor after emancipation.

Although the exploitation of children by their parents was common in nineteenth century low-wage industries, the problem of labor becomes clear to Washington when he sees himself in contrast with the happy children who attend school. This moment of contrast, of awakening through the control of his labor by another, marks a kind of transitory becoming for the young Washington. In his disappointment, Washington identifies with the salt furnace (it becomes "his" place of work), which he understands in juxtaposition not to the schoolhouse but to the children passing to and from school. Their commute accentuates his immobility; their happiness as children draws attention to his station as laborer. More critically, the denial of education placed into stark relief that Washington did not control his own labor. Whether it was because of the Ferguson household's poverty or because Wash Ferguson understood children had economic value in the unskilled salt packing economy, Washington's experience of life in freedom was one of subjection to the forced management of his labor. Without doubt, the refusal of education plus the recognition of his economic value only brought with it the burden of a stationary permanence, a prohibition of the mobility the children attending school enjoyed. This tension between the demand for labor and the desire for education forced scores of freed black Southerners to make difficult and compromising decisions, in an effort to negotiate their values with their realities in life after slavery. While Washington acknowledges the weight of this labor-education contention on his early years, he attributes his coming of age from child to adult and from laborer to leader to the ways he responds to these challenges.

Early in the chapter Washington explains his intense longing to learn to read and how he began to teach himself what he calls "book knowledge." Despite the debased living conditions in Malden, Washington does not allow the town nor his work at the salt furnace to suffocate his desire to read. It seems "book knowledge" not only meant the content in textbooks and such but also the very act of reading itself. The first thing Washington says he learns by way of book knowledge did not come from a book at all but from numerical markers on barrels at the salt furnace: "The first thing I ever learned in the way of book knowledge was while working in the salt-furnace. Each salt packer had his barrels marked with a certain number. The number allotted to my stepfather was "18." At the close of the day's work the boss of the packers would come around an put "18" on each of our barrels, and I soon learned to recognize that figure wherever I saw it, and after a while got to the point where I could make that figure, though I knew nothing about any other figures or letters."[159] Shortly thereafter, when Washington receives his first book from his mother—an old copy of Webster's "blue-back" spelling book—he "devours" it, teaching himself the

alphabet. Although, as he recounts, "there was not a single member of my race anywhere near us who could read, and I was too timid to approach any of the white people," Washington claims to have mastered the greater portion of the alphabet within a few weeks.[160] When the day school finally opens in Kanawha Valley and Washington's stepfather prohibits him from attending, Washington does not acquiesce to life as a subsistence laborer. In his determination, Washington applies himself "with greater earnestness than ever to the mastering of what was in the 'blue-back' speller"; additionally he made arrangements with the school teacher to receive night lessons and he says he "let no opportunity slip to push my case" to attend day school.[161] Once permitted to attend day school, Washington faced the challenge of arriving to school on time because of his morning work obligations. In response, he confesses to manipulating the office clock at the furnace to both satisfy his obligation to work and to arrive at school on time. When necessity beckoned and Washington had to quit attending day school to work, he responded by resuming night school, often having to walk several miles at night to recite his lessons. Then Washington began working in the coal mines. When he says "I do not believe that one ever experiences anywhere else such darkness as he does in a coal-mine," it is difficult to not imagine that Washington is speaking allegorically about this moment in life—especially considering that two paragraphs prior, he states: "There was never a time in my youth, no matter how dark and discouraging the days might be, when one resolve did not continually remain with me, and that was a determination to secure an education at any cost."[162]

Based on how he narrativizes his experiences in this chapter, Washington is demonstrating that he too—as a young, dependent boy, part of a young and inexperienced race, in an inchoate freedom—faced the challenges new life in freedom would present. However, he would not succumb to the demoralized, exploitative, and debilitating conditions that came to define the many experiences of freed blacks in the rural South. If it was not clear from the opening chapter title "A Slave Among Slaves," in this chapter, Washington establishes his position as organic leader to the Southern masses.

By way of Washington's account of his trials and his determination to overcome them, Washington's critical voice emerges in this chapter, most pronounced at the beginning and the end of "Boyhood Days." Part of that what motivates Washington's criticism here is how he juxtaposes his coming-of-age experiences with the failure of the race to come of age in the early days of freedom. Because the tension between labor and education was such a critical issue, Washington had to address how he negotiated the challenges this antagonism presented. But Washington does not provide a resolution. Rather, he changes the terms of the problem in order to circumvent what he could not resolve. Washington's retelling of how he negotiated the demand for his labor with his desire for education suggests that the problem does not lie in the contention between labor and education but in the social and economic fitness of the individual to survive the challenge of life in early freedom. Washington never gripes about labor itself, even when he descends into the darkness of the coal mines. However, he does take issue with not being able to control his own labor, or rather, with his stepfather controlling his time and his labor. Especially here, it should not be lost that Washington's rise to prominence coincided with the rising popularity of Social Darwinism in the United States. What Herbert Spencer called the "survival of the fittest" was easily and loosely applied to social and purportedly "natural" traits in order to define the qualities of social fitness and economic success in a

competitive society.[163] As Social Darwinism provided rationale for laissez-fare economics, liberalism would increasingly inform freedom in the economic terms of ownership, individualism, independence (as in no governmental interference), and the pursuit of wealth. As Washington understood it, the key to wealth was land ownership and the key to land ownership is the ability to control one's own labor. This is the problem Wash Ferguson and the mines posed to a young Washington—someone else controlled his labor.

Concerning education, Washington spends no time discussing the problems constantly challenging the existence and continuation of the school in Malden. Washington seems to separate the black townspeople's struggle for education from his individual pursuit of freedom.[164] Implicitly, Washington claims that education in itself would not be his salvation. Rather, it is his ambition for an education that frees Washington and allows him to reclaim, in part, ownership of his labor. As is apparent in "Boyhood Days," Washington's struggle for education does not emphasize what learning to read could afford him or the ways the content of his learning could awaken new possibilities for his life.[165] Rather, Washington's emphasis is on his ingenuity to secure an education: he "learned to recognize" numerical figures from working in the salt furnace, "induced" his mother to procure him his first book, mastered the alphabet without the help of any white people, manipulated his work schedule to attend day school, succeeded in "making arrangements with the teacher" to give him night lessons, and his determination to learn outpaced what he was taught by his teachers.[166] For the later authorial Washington, this struggle for education is not really about literacy, learning, or intellectual development. *What* he learned was secondary to *how* he learned, or rather, how he taught himself. Particularly during this transitory period for Washington, education was the opportunity to exercise a degree of decision-making autonomy over his life.

To discuss education in this way, and to do so in "Boyhood Days" (rather than, say, in the following chapter "The Struggle for an Education"), is critical to understanding the coming to age functionality of the chapter. This is the first moment in *Up From Slavery* where Washington writes of his own agency. It is not education itself but the determination to learn coupled with the practice of this agency that matures Washington, and even saves him from a life recognized only by his economic use-value for another. In short, Washington becomes his own savior, delivered by his own ambition. His determination to secure an education went further than the actual education Washington credits gaining in this chapter. So the real battle is not between labor and education; it is between not controlling one's own labor and the ambitious determination to pursue a vision for a larger life. Although Washington's personal recollections for the chapter end with "the blackest darkness" of the coal mine, he refuses to identify with the many children across coal mining districts who are compelled to spend the majority of their lives in the mines and who have little opportunity to get an education. These children, Washington notes, are often "physically and mentally dwarfed" to the point where they "soon lose ambition to do anything else than to continue as a coal-miner."[167] Although similarly compelled to work in the coal mines, subject to the same exploitative labor conditions, and deprived of educational opportunities, Washington is no longer laborer like these other children. By chapter's end, Washington's ambition affords him the ability to choose another way.

Whatever revisionism Washington performs in telling the story of how he overcame the salt mine and exploitation by his stepfather and the obstacles to gaining an education, it

was all done in service of articulating a pathway to freedom different from what emancipation and Reconstruction offered. The version of freedom Washington hoped to teach through the story of his life is one legible to the post-Reconstruction liberal turn. When Washington writes of his ambition as a child, he is writing of his industriousness, thrift, and ingenuity, of his practice of the Protestant ethic. For his white readership, Washington transforms the image of the black subject from listless to industrious by demonstrating his own embodiment of these virtues, even prior to his encounters with Mrs. Ruffner, Miss Mackey, and General Armstrong—the staunch Yankees whom Washington credits as most influential in his moral training of in the secular religiosity of hard work. For his black audience, Washington demonstrates that freedom is born of an utilitarian ethic and that it is the freedom of the economic man, the man who proves himself in the competitive market.[168] For his broader audience—Northern, Southern, wealthy, impoverished, white, black—Washington writes "Boyhood Days" as less autobiography and more Horatio Algerian dime novel success story. Washington understood that within this genre, the depths of the "rags" are able to excite fascination and encourage accommodation just as much as the heights of the "riches." Ergo, one cannot get more ragged, more debased than Malden, wherein conditions were worse than those in slavery. One cannot experience compulsory labor like child exploitation by a hard stepfather. One cannot experience the blackest darkness liken does in the in the coal mine. Nevertheless, Washington retains a morality that does not reject the benefits of labor and an ethic that propels him to pursue his education while satisfying his labor responsibilities through clever and determined hard work.

It is no coincidence success story dime novels captivated the American cultural imagination at the same time the nation championed Andrew Carnegie's rise from immigration to steel magnate, Social Darwinism was the cavalier justification for social prejudices and hierarchies, and an economically motivated liberalism increasingly informed the turning of the tide in national politics. This is the climate in which Washington writes *Up From Slavery*, with the ends of leading black Southerners (and perhaps the South in general) out of the wilderness of Reconstruction's errors and establishing a practically-based, materially-sustained means for freed blacks to self-fashion a new type of freedom. But these goals are not without compromise. The *laissez-fare,* competitive, social survivalist ethos of the day would not find it strange to decry the inherent problems and natural wretchedness of black Americans and acknowledge their potential to progress to a higher social position, appropriate for black Americans.[169] As much as the leading economic and cultural thought of the day reified black inferiority, Washington also saw the opportunity for recognition and white accommodation of freedmen. Washington does not refute the claims of black inadequacy in freedom in "Boyhood Days" but he argues it is of no inherent fault of their own. He writes, "The world should not pass judgment upon the Negro, and especially the Negro youth, too quickly or too harshly. The Negro boy has obstacles, discouragement, and temptations to battle with that are little known to those not situated as he is. When a boy undertakes a task, it is taken for granted that he will succeed. On the other hand, people are usually surprised if the Negro boy does not fail. In a word, the Negro youth starts out with the presumption against him."[170] Washington acknowledges the claim that freed black Southerners are unfit for freedom but he attributes it to the unique set of obstacles they face in their freedom. However, these obstacles can be

overcome, which Washington attempts to demonstrate with his own experiences in the boyhood days of freedom. Hopefully, as Washington retells his experiences, replete with all the virtues praised by liberal bourgeois sensibility, the presumptions that black Americans are predisposed to failure and subjection will subside because the same qualities black Americans practice that constitute the allure of American civilization and progress, freedom and prosperity, ought to become recognizable to his white readership. In this way, Washington's coming-of-age is suggestive of a coming into freedom that is familiar to his Northern and Southern white audience.

In the final two paragraphs of the chapter, Washington transforms the lessons of his individual coming of age to lessons for the race. He says:

> I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed. Looked at from this standpoint, I almost reach the conclusion that often the Negro boy's birth and connection with an unpopular race is an advantage, so far as real life is concerned. With few exceptions, the Negro youth must work harder and must perform his task even better than a white youth in order to secure recognition. But out of the hard and unusual struggle which he is compelled to pass, he gets a strength, a confidence, that one misses whose pathway is comparatively smooth by reason of birth and race. From any point of view, I had rather be what I am, a member of the Negro race, than be able to claim membership with the most favoured of any other race. I have always been made sad when I have heard members of any race claiming rights and privileges, or certain badges of distinction, on the ground simply that they were members of this or that race, regardless of their individual worth or attainments. I have been made to feel sad for such persons because I am conscious of the fact that mere connection with what is known as a superior race will not permanently carry an individual forward unless he has individual worth, and mere connection with what is regarded as an inferior race will not finally hold an individual back if he possesses intrinsic, individual merit. Every persecuted individual and race should get much consolation out of the great human law, which is universal and eternal, that merit, no matter under what skin found, is in the long run, recognized and rewarded. This I have said here, not to call attention to myself as an individual but to the race to which I am proud to belong.[171]

With these final words, Washington summarizes the lessons of his youth but, more importantly, he introduces what he considers to be the fundamental tenets for how an adolescent race can mature in their freedom. There is an introductory function to this passage because the remainder of *Up From Slavery* as autobiographical self-help uplift manual is founded on these lessons-turned-principles. Washington's project to show the path up from slavery and to create a legible free black subject both work on an implied vision for how to be free and how freed black masses are to approach post-slavery Southern life. Washington is clear in emphasizing in "Boyhood Days" that freedom brought

challenges but that success, individualism, and merit can institute a new practical, utilitarian means of achieving freedom. As the crowning jewel of Washington's vision, how he defines success is critical. He shifts the focus away from one's status in society and measures success by the amount of obstacles one overcomes. In this sense, struggle is good, even advantageous; the greater the struggle, the greater—potentially—the reward of success. The utility of struggle supports Washington's rationale for his brand of race pride. Freed black Southerners should embrace their birth and connection to an unpopular race because it means there is more to overcome. The exclusion via non-recognition and the isolation of having no ancestry together force an individualistic self-reliance where one looks to their own hands rather than to another for support. Putting forth twice the effort demonstrates a resilience that will secure recognition from others and solidify a sense of intrinsic worth. If success—that is, the overcoming of obstacles—is the reward on the journey up from slavery, then rugged individualism is the vehicle by which freed black masses can traverse the Washingtonian road to freedom. Undergirding all of this is the universal and eternal human law of merit. As the great equalizer that sees neither color, individual particularities, nor racial hierarchy, the law of merit regulates the road up from slavery; it is the objective governing agent which determines how much progress a people can make from slavery to freedom. The infallibility of intrinsic individual merit can transform struggle to success, exclusionary unpopularity to praiseworthy individualism, and ultimately, an illegible mass of freedmen to legibly free black citizen-subjects. Achieving this recognition and accomplishing this transformation is the goal for Washington's pragmatic program for freedom, and it all turns on the universal law of merit.

This approach, however, would not become the solution to the race problems dominating Southern life and American discourse at the turn of the century. At best, Washington offers a compromising solution—one that appears to be a viable means of escape/uplift for freed black Southerners but that comes at a cost most sobering to those most hopeful. Washington's endeavor to create a free black subject legible to turn of the century American values, revise black life in slavery according to liberal bourgeois sensibilities, and esteem individual merit above the structural conditions affecting the lived and felt realities of black Southerners are all investments in the idealism of freedom as inclusion. The trouble is, Washington's solution fails to solve the race problems of his day because his idealism fails to address directly the everyday problems the freed black masses endured. Although Washington revises the definition of success to accommodate the prevalence of the struggles black Southerners faced in freedom, the social, economic, and political issues creating these struggles are not identified as the impediment to Southern black progress. Instead, a priori struggle becomes the defining feature of a success that is achieved by way of a self-determination to work twice as hard. On the road to this "successful" freedom, Washington subjects black life to struggle—excusing it and permitting it in so far as it befits the narrative of overcoming. Curiously, the "struggles," "obstacles," and "disappointments" the freed black Southerners endure remain vague and unnamed throughout *Up From Slavery*. In this narrative of uplift and overcoming, obstacles and disappointments are but a means to an end. They happen but they are not real. Although they affect the psychosomatic experience of black life, to orient life in freedom around feeling and the felt would be impractical and purposeless in the pursuit of success in freedom. And so the racial lawlessness of mob rule, lynchings, disfranchisement, economic exploitation, institutional exclusion, and the racial reign of terror that swept the

South during and after Reconstruction all became narrative fodder for the rugged individualism of the emerging free black subject.

Washington's glorification of a self-made, self-reliant individualism comes by way of acknowledging the unpopularity of being black in America. A curious way to claim race pride, Washington embraces his connection to "an unpopular race" because it lends itself to so many obstacles. The logic would be familiar to Washington's readership because this narrative strategy is what made *Up From Slavery* the first black nonfiction success story that aroused the same sentiment as Horatio Alger's success stories. But Washington's embrace of the claim about black unpopularity performs another function, one more nefarious in character and detrimental in narrative impact. In an effort to represent a life so unpopular and so burdened with obstacles, Washington reduces black life to little more than the product of oppressive conditions. For the sake of emphasizing that black youth are without homestead, Washington denies black youth the possibility of ancestry and family history in overcoming obstacles.[172] In this argument against ancestry, the existence of genealogy, family, and extended support networks for the freed black masses are thrown into relief. Black life becomes ontologically isolated: it is reduced to the consequence of rupture, existing with neither a generative past nor a connective present. These are the conditions in which the Washingtonian individual will emerge, recognizable and legible to the turn of the century ideal of the free American subject. This form of individualism argues for a version of uplift at odds with, and even arguably, the catalyst for the demise of a broader collective effort toward racial advancement in freedom.[173] The intrinsic individual worth Washington champions cannot exist with the benefits of collective action and kinship support networks; this worth is forged in the isolation of black unpopularity. He originates from a benighted land, is denied by slavery the opportunities for education and ownership, and is released into freedom unprepared, with nothing but the impractical desire to feel free. In short, the free black subject, successful in his freedom, must come from nothing and overcome it all.

This vision of the pathway to freedom is so consumed by the hopeful promise in one's own hands that all else either falls or is placed out of focus. Washington is after a freedom that is gained and not given, secured by one's own hand and not conferred by political imposition. To do this, Washington turns to what he calls the universal and eternal law of merit. While this law appears to be the basis for an undeniably recognizable free black subjectivity, it functions more as a series of compromises that would further subject the freed black masses. First, it is important to consider why—in a chapter about the practices freed blacks developed to navigate the new exploitative conditions of Southern life post-slavery—Washington would make his case for black recognition with an abstract "great human law." Would the explanation of his own ingenuity be insufficient? Was his ambition and stick-to-itiveness unrecognizable? Could his performance of individual hard work not register in the bootstrap narrative of American uplift? The fact is, Washington had to defer to something much broader than his experience. He *needed* a law that would be agreed to as universally human, transcending time, space, and sociality. Merit is one of the cornerstones in what Wilson Moses calls "the tradition of self-interested utilitarian religion." The connection here is that in Washington's ideology, there is no dividing line between the practical and the religious. The universal law of merit was a pitch to not only American values but also to America's devotion to Christianity itself. If there were anything

to overcome the racialism that rendered the freed black masses un-visible and illegible, it would be the interpretation of American Christianity which reinforced traditions of republican virtue and civic humanism—the Christianity of General Samuel C. Armstrong, the "civil religion of disinterested republican humanism, a reinvigorated communitarianism in the Reconstruction South, on which the emancipated masses must depend after the Hamiltonian leviathan of federal government had withdrawn."[174] But the compromise is that Washington concedes to the racist sentiment, choosing instead to focus on this law of merit. He would not confront the problem of anti-black racism and the misrecognition and invisibility it perpetrates. Racist sentiment would be permitted if the white gaze toward the black masses at least acknowledges the universal law of merit.[175]

Second, ironically, Washington's deference to the law of merit compromises his project to develop a pragmatic approach to freedom. While the law of merit may recognize the worth that comes from individual hard work, racism and race-based exploitation, domination, and prejudice toward black Americans does not. Rather, it sees a mass of bodies, a horde of flesh without personhood or subjectivity, to use and control, to extract labor and profit, and to project the darkest, most uncivilized, abject fears and fantasies of American consciousness. In short, anti-black racism refuses to recognize meritorious worth in black life.[176] The law of merit, in all of its proposed objectivity, cannot escape and is unable to surmount this problem of recognition. This is where Washington's idealism undermines his attempt to develop a utilitarian, economic-driven, industrial and industrious approach to freedom. Even if the attention of black Southerners were exclusively on merit, that universally recognized protestant and capitalist value, that could not save them from mob rule and the systematic facilitation of anti-black violence. Tragically, Ida B. Wells made it clear in her account of the 1892 lynching of three Memphis businessmen that even those who avoided politics and practiced the Bookerite principles for economic uplift could not evade lynch law, which sentenced them to death for "getting too independent."[177] The universal is, at best, a hopeful claim. Universality purports a cohesion that requires sequestering the abnormal, the inexcusable, the difficult to describe. The ubiquity attributed to universality functions only by way of exclusion. As much as Washington may be arguing that black masses ought to be recognized under the universal law of merit, his claim willfully disregards the racial climate of the post-Reconstruction South. It is this racist public sentiment characterizing the postbellum turn of century period that is the abnormal and difficult to describe phenomena to be effaced in order to make the universality of merit plausible. And so the system of economic exploitation, abject poverty, mis- and under-education, and the discriminatory logic of anti-black racism—these the real reasons behind why Washington's accounts of his coming of age are insufficient as a roadmap up from slavery for the black masses and an interracial South—must be left out. In Washington's series of compromises, the eternal and universal law of merit can provide a human visibility to freed black Southerners but only if it first effaces the racist sentiment against black life.

If Washington's appeal is to work, the law of merit would place an exacting demand on black life. The desire to feel one's freedom would have to be curtailed; the labor to build one's freedom would have to stretched. Washington's pragmatic approach to being free would show that this kind of merit is in fact intrinsic to black Americans but, it has to be excavated. The benighted must be brought to the light; the ignorant must be educated with

good hard common sense; the uncivilized must be taught proper sensibilities; the exploited must learn to cultivate a larger vision for life and labor with a purpose. The same means by which Washington hoped to mold black life to prove its intrinsic worth would also contort that life, contriving a new bondage masquerading as freedom. The body is burdened, suffering under the responsibility to earn its individuality and prove it is worthy of being free. The spirit—which is to be extracted from the bodily, the sensuous, the felt, and to be separated from history and kinship—is subjected to the great human law. And this law provides neither protection nor guarantee. The law of merit only demands work. Against the hope of Washington's idealism, merit in itself held no transformative power in the socioeconomic landscape of the South during the Nadir. The power resides in the white gaze, in the degree to which liberal American bourgeois configurations of civilization and citizenship would recognize black life. So when Washington presents the freed black masses at the feet of the eternal and universal law of merit, he offers them as a sacrifice to the gods of the New South. Public sentiment ruled the post-Reconstruction racial state and public sentiment would determine whether the freed black masses possessed enough intrinsic individual worth to be included in the free American citizenry.

The South Washington inherited as leader was a world created by compromise. In this world, there is nothing holy. Nothing sacrosanct. The recourse black Americans once found in the Constitution was vacated. The authority of the law was subjected to the authority of the mob; moral politics became obsolescent as public sentiment dictated how the South, and the nation at large, would deal with the race problem. For the formerly enslaved, the promise of emancipation was annulled with the coming of freedom. The gap between being freed and being free exposed the tenuousness of freedom itself. With no guarantees, no certainty, and little political protection, black Americans met a series of challenges post-slavery that looked eerily similar to, although institutionally different from, life under slavery. Without an authority above the subjective whims of a South harboring bitter resentment toward black Americans, Washington's *Up From Slavery* project would attempt to pave a way the freed black masses could secure their own freedom, established by their own hands, which could not be denied by white Southerners and Northerners alike.

And yet, Washington's attempt to develop a freedom for the black masses was fundamentally flawed and his project was undermined by his own idealism. While Washington makes the case for being a leader from among the people, his program for how to be free did not feature the felt conditions and lived realities of freed black life. His pragmatic, self-determined freedom deemphasizes the ways freed black people lived, felt about, imagined, and practiced an all too fraught freedom, and emphasizes the idealistic tenets of the American narrative of independence. Washington's goal was to make the freed black masses legible to the image of the free American subject as it appears in the national imagination at the turn of the twentieth century. In the process, the life of the black masses is rendered invisible, along with alternative possibilities for how to practice being free. In his ambition to uplift the race to become what it is not, Washington loses sight of whom he is leading. One wonders if he even saw black freed men and women beyond black masses ripe for use. Consequently, the same stratagems Washington uses in an effort to save his people also function to further subject, exploit, and even kill his people. This is the problem black leadership faced at the turn of the century and beyond. This is the problem of leadership attempting to define for the masses how their freedom ought to look and how it

should be practiced. This is an inherent problem of mediated representation, especially when black masses fail to register as human but as plastic beings, a medium to be molded, a body of undesirable attitudes and practices to be disciplined.[178] Regardless of the vacillating popularity of Washington, the story of his leadership reveals how steep the cost of political compromise. Particularly as it concerns black life in America, compromise is often premised on an embrace of an idealism that appeals to radical, transformative possibilities and that requires the continued subjection of black life. This is the bind that ensnares Washington and many others throughout the twentieth century who work to imagine freedom for black Americans according to an ideal of freedom yet predicated on the exclusion of that which is made black. The occasion of the promise is also the occasion of the problem.

Chapter Four

THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM

Without question, *The Souls of Black Folk* is one of the most intellectually impactful collections of essays of the twentieth century, written by one of the most intellectually influential thinkers of the twentieth century. What makes W.E.B. DuBois so critically acclaimed, particularly with what he puts forward in *Souls*, is his ability to analyze, in concert, the abstract and the material, and to articulate—in ways so analytically precise, disciplinarily layered, and prosaically approachable—generative ways of naming and thinking about already existing social phenomena. Double consciousness. The Veil. The color line. Sorrow songs. Each of these describe conditions or responses to conditions black Americans endured from slavery through the turn of the twentieth century. But these terms do more than that; they each bring definition to the *experience* of the conditions affecting black life, allowing for new and different ways of understanding the meaning of being black and American, the conditions contextualizing black life, and the actions black people take because of and in spite of these conditions. When DuBois does this in *Souls*, he not only popularizes a novel set of expressions, he also shifts racial discourse, changing the ways race is talked about and studied in the twentieth century.

DuBois begins this work from the beginning. "The Forethought" opens: "Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem the color-line."[179] The final clause of these two sentences has easily become the most prominent and memorable clause in all of *Souls*. Maybe it is because the heft and urgency with which DuBois writes makes hyperbolic claim read as plausible statement. Perhaps it is because, retrospectively, we have witnessed the veracity of DuBois' 1903 prophecy decade after decade, even now into the twenty-first century. Whatever the reason for its popularity, this statement is memorialized for DuBois' prognostication. But, I want to suggest that as much as DuBois is looking forward in these opening sentences, he is looking backward as well, speaking of what is necessary for the times to come based on what has come before. Demarcations between past, present, and future are blurry here. There is no direct reference to the past except to wonder about the "many things" DuBois references as buried. Where are they buried? How did they come to be buried? The pages of *Souls* do not conceal but are a guide, taking the reader to the sites unseen, directing the reader on how to read that which lies outside the readily visible and comprehensible. For DuBois the historian, the events of the nineteenth century and their consequences, too quickly buried in anticipation for the modernity of the twentieth century, are what require present consideration at the dawning of the new. Conversely, as the present is to be concerned with the extended life of the past, so too is the future not separate from the present. DuBois' prophecy for the twentieth century is not what will come but what already is. Here, at the

junction of what is buried but very much alive and what will come that already is, DuBois begins to revise the terms of racial discourse in America.

The subject of *Souls* is the strange meaning of being black in America, by all means a familiar topic at the beginning of the century. The conversation about race was a glut of mostly negligent preoccupations with the "Negro Question" and the "Negro Problem." From academic scholarship and scientific research to stump speeches and judicial interpretations to salon talk and popular culture representations, to speak of race was to speak of the negro problem. But DuBois refuses the mumbo jumbo of problem and question, choosing instead to write of the meaning of being black, a meaning both inherently strange and strange for the reader to comprehend. Also, the word 'Negro' is noticeably absent, not only from these sentences but from the entirety of "The Forethought." By resisting the common language of the day, DuBois holds in abeyance the already politically and culturally saturated construct of the Negro and disrupts the presumed a priori knowledge of black people each reader relies upon when approaching a text about race. Albeit subtle, these suspensions of prejudgments are purposed to make unfamiliar a subject thought to be easy, common knowledge. More than not knowing how to talk about race and race relations at the dawn of the century, *Souls*' audience does not know what it means to be black. It does not know the experience of being that is colored, marked, birthed in, and shaped by race, particularly racial blackness. But, if DuBois can get the reader to read patiently, through the unfamiliarity, suspending the presumptive thinking about race and anticipating that the dawning of the century would have implications for the meaning of being black, then he will be able to show, much more accurately, the problem of the present and present to come.

When DuBois makes use of the trope of the problem, it is not a Negro Problem; it is not a problem owned, attributed to, or characterizing any particular group. The problem of the twentieth century is larger than any particular group problem, Southern regional problem, or even American problem: it is a problem of the time and of the time to come. Likewise, in naming the color line as problem, DuBois expands the scope of what is at issue. The problem of the color line is the problem of that which creates division. In other words, it is not only the manifestation of segregation but also the reason (and all that constitutes reason) which rationalizes racial separation and justifies racially influenced hierarchical difference. For the gentle reader—to the one who with patience reads, excavates, and coalesces the many things necessary to perceive with unfamiliar eyes the meaning of being black—that reader will see that the strangeness of what it means to be black is directly related to this problem of the color line. To comprehend the meaning of being black is to better comprehend the problem of the century. Conversely, to apprehend the problem of the color line for the sake of resolving the problem of the century, is to take the time to see black subjectivity, to read the humanity of those negotiating the strangeness of living in a land, in a time governed by the tyranny of a line dividing the visible and that which is made invisible.

If it was not apparent at this point that DuBois' study of the problem of race in American diverges from his contemporaries' studies of race, DuBois proposes to show the strange meaning of being black and its relationship to the problem of the color line by sketching what he calls "the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans lives and strive." Adjacent to the material concerns surrounding black life—such as the questions of bodies, labor, land, jobs, education, poverty, crime, and a host of other issues

dominating the daily physical realities of black people—exists a lesser seen world, a world on the other side of the color line, buried, hidden from the sight of the impatient, cursory reader. According to DuBois' "vague, uncertain outline," to begin to understand this spiritual world requires understanding what Emancipation meant to black Americans, what was Emancipation's aftermath, the slow rise of personal leadership, the two worlds within and without the Veil, and the central problem of training men for life. Corresponding with the chapters in *Souls*, to see the spiritual requires deeper detail, wherein DuBois studies the struggles of black peasantry and the relations of the sons of the former slaveholders and the formerly enslaved. Finally, DuBois completes his sketch by lifting the Veil separating white and black to reveal the deeper meanings within the Veil of religion, human sorrows, the struggles of its greater souls, and a tale oft told but seldom written.[180]

The above observations about DuBois' attention to the continued life of the past, the hope of disrupting the presumed knowledge about black people and America's race problem, and the sketched outline of the spiritual world each suggest that one of *Souls*' contributions to the twentieth century is its ability to read and respond to the past. More specifically, *Souls* is a response to the past forty years, beginning in 1863 with the legal, state-sanctioned coming of freedom for enslaved black Americans. The significance of DuBois beginning his sketch of the spiritual world with the meaning of emancipation and its aftermath cannot be understated. The critical linkages DuBois begins to draw here in "The Forethought," he further develops in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings." What emerges are historical, sociopolitical, and sociocultural connections between the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, between the coming of freedom and the problem of the color line, and the desire for freedom with the desire for the world without the Veil to recognize the world within the Veil. *Souls* reveals the ways that the strangeness of the meaning of being black peculiar to the twentieth century began to take shape once the coming of freedom was set in motion. Also, the postwar government-sponsored emancipatory effort provided the occasion for the shift in the institutional exclusion and domination of black Americans with the passing of slavery and the advent of Jim Crow. By way of these revelations, *Souls* suggests that to understand the coming of freedom and the ways it impacted black Americans' desire for freedom is to begin to grasp the meaning of being black and how it is black Americans live and strive at the dawn of the twentieth century.

I am interested particularly in ways *Souls* is a twentieth century response to the coming of freedom and the impact this response has on the ways we understand the struggle for freedom in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. What did the coming of freedom accomplish? What did it fail to accomplish? What lessons do emancipation and the subsequent acts intending to bring freedom offer for the twentieth century? What was left incomplete? What was overlooked in freedom's arrival? Ultimately, what kept the coming of freedom from being the realization of freedom? The event of freedom was, at best, incomplete; at worst, it was a failure. As a response to the disappointed fulfillment of freedom, *Souls* suggests a social politics wherein the pursuit of freedom requires addressing the problems of the spiritual world—particularly the problem of color prejudice which, working through the color line, segregates society and divides the soul. As a result of DuBois' reliance on reciprocal recognition as the primary force to combat this problem, the struggle for freedom in the twentieth century has been largely characterized by the desire for recognition. Consequently, despite DuBois' critique of the coming of freedom,

what he presents in *Souls* is a pathway to freedom similarly frustrated, limited in that it is subject to racial recognition, the highly regulated domain governed by the refusal and continued exclusion of blackness from American social life.

In order to think through the incompleteness of freedom to which *Souls* is responding, it may be useful to consider the coming of freedom as performative event. Speech act theory is helpful here, specifically when applied to the Reconstruction Amendments.[181] As legislative speech acts, the Reconstruction Amendments ultimately prove to be infelicitous in that their actions of abolition, naturalization, and enfranchisement quickly became of no effect for black Americans, conspicuously so in the South. This approach serves as yet another means to assess the failure of Reconstruction at the hands of political and social compromise. Although Reconstruction fails, it would be irresponsible to not acknowledge that Reconstruction fundamentally affected America's social and political fabric and produced changes to the law of the land that would, at least theoretically, forever commit the nation to the radical efforts of those Republicans. As performatives, the very declaration of the Reconstruction Amendments constituted the event of freedom. This is not to say, obviously, that the mere ratification of the Amendments meant that the freed became the free, embodying, experiencing the privileges and protections of liberty. Rather, it is to say that they made something happen; they signaled and produced the arrival of something different. Each act performed a transformation—freedom itself was being manufactured, its boundaries, permissions, possibilities, and impossibilities re-engineered. I want to pick up here for this chapter's engagement with DuBois, with the force of the event, the performative potential of freedom's arrival. Loosely following DuBois' chronicle of freedom in *Souls*, my construal of the coming of freedom as event comprises multiple performative acts, including the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments.

But we are presented with what appears to be a hermeneutic contradiction. Is it possible to read the coming of freedom both as the performative force reconstituting American life and as failing to be fulfilled? With all that the event put into operation—redefining the meaning of freedom, transforming the social, political, economic, and cultural landscape of the nation—how is it that the coming of freedom was yet incomplete, unfulfilled, stymied, unsuccessful, and seemingly without force? Evaluating what happened after freedom's arrival is crucial here. The success or failure of freedom for black Americans appeared to be subject to the retaliations and recuperations of power beginning throughout the South. Radical postwar idealism was rejected. Political compromise was the consensus between North, South, and West. The abnegation of the federal Reconstruction agenda became Southern public policy.[182] Additionally, virulent responses throughout the South set in motion a reign of racial terror in the service of the re-establishment of white supremacy. The disruption freedom brought to the systematic domination of black Americans was swiftly and violently neutralized. New iterations of anti-black exploitation and exclusion became the cornerstones for the post-Reconstruction "New South." The cause of freedom for black Americans was undermined, compromised, appropriated, and in some cases, simply disregarded. In retaliation to the coming of freedom, calculated political maneuverings and racist social machinations remade the American world. By studying these reactions, we learn about this reconstructed world, the

staying power of racial hierarchy, the recoup of race-based exploitation, the institutionalization of social exclusion, strategies of disfranchisement, and the ruses of a distorted liberalism creating the burden of individuality for the newly freed.[183] But the enduring power of subjection also reveals much about the precariousness of freedom.

Of peculiar interest are the ways these postwar reactions expose the incongruities of freedom—the inconsistencies, the loopholes, the areas where freedom did not, or would not, or perhaps, was not allowed to go. It was apparent that rampant racial backlash presented significant limitations to the practice of freedom for black Americans. That was its purpose. However, hidden in plain sight were the limitations of freedom itself—or more accurately, the boundaries and restraints put in place to circumscribe the force of freedom. This limitation is about context and the efforts to successfully contextualize the coming of freedom. The issue I am emphasizing, more so than the campaigns seeking to undo the coming of freedom's provisions, is the matter of reading the performative force of freedom. By reading, I mean how it is that the coming of freedom is comprehended, how it is made sense of, how the reach of its impact is determined, its value interpreted, and its scope premeditated. This is a problem of apprehension. The performative possibilities of freedom—its force, its transformative capacities—are arrested, seized for the purpose of possessive control. This in turn determines the ways freedom is perceived, how it is recognized, and the means by which it is understood. It also betrays the anxieties about freedom and the anticipatory desires to direct and constrain its outcome. Said brusquely, the coming of freedom did not have a chance to be what it could have been.

To think through the problem of the coming of freedom—which is the problem of a frustrated or unfulfilled performative event, a problem of reading and of contextualization—Jacques Derrida's thoughts on the performative in his essay "Signature Event Context" are particularly instructive.[184] In his reading of J.L. Austin's study of performatives, Derrida features the ways in which Austin attempts to avoid the risk of performatives failing. As Derrida deconstructs the success/failure dialectic in Austin analysis, he identifies the risk of failure as essential to the performative and demonstrates how, ironically, the conventions Austin uses to create the necessary context for success are the very factors limiting the possibilities of the performative. After describing the reasons Derrida expresses interest in performatives, I will explain the coming of freedom as performative event according to these reasons, highlight the primary concerns Derrida has with Austin's analysis, and briefly discuss how Austin's missteps can help us understand the coming of freedom as being unfulfilled.

In the opening section of "Signature," Derrida writes about communication and the degree to which it has been largely reduced to the a priori definition of the transmission of a meaning. But communication corresponds to more than a univocal, controllable concept. As a word, the polysemic aspects of communication expand its semantic domain beyond that of semantics, semiotics, and linguistics. Additionally, communication is not confined to transmitting meaning only; just as communication can operate outside of semantics, semiotics, and linguistics, it also designates nonsematic movements. Of course, these matters of polysemy and dissemination present a problem for the concept of communication. As a result, the ambiguity of the word communication can be greatly reduced by the limitations of context. Conventional context functions by confining communications (broadly conceived in discursive form) to "the element of a determinate,

'natural' language […] which commands certain very particular uses of the word *communication*."[185] At this point, Derrida asks, "are the conditions of a context ever absolutely determinable?" to which he responds: "does the notion of context not conceal, behind a certain confusion, philosophical presuppositions of a very determinate nature? Stating it in the most summary manner possible, I shall try to demonstrate why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather, why its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated."[186] This is all necessary background for Derrida's engagement with Austin. To the overdetermination of context in communication, the performative is quite the problematic. Derrida gives four reason why.

First, Austin seems to consider speech acts only as acts of communication. This matters because Austin's emphasis on performatives (utterances which accomplish something through speech itself) in opposition to constatives (utterances which, generally, make true or false descriptions of facts as assertions) potentially open up communication beyond being purely a semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept. Performatives indicate a break from the already predetermined idea of communication as "a vehicle, a means of transport or transitional medium of a *meaning*, and moreover of a *unified* meaning."[187] Second, performatives do not "designate the transference or passage of thought-content." In other words, they go beyond the act of imparting information or knowledge. Instead, performatives are concerned with "the communication of an original movement, an operation and the production of an effect."[188] As a new category of communication, performatives do not function according to the fixity of unified meaning and the stability of communication as transmission only. Rather, they carry out action and create movement; they communicate force. What results, potentially, is that the determined course of the vehicle is derailed. The unity of meaning is obstructed. Third, performatives effectuate; they produce and transform situations. Although constative utterances effect situations as well, of paramount significance here is that this ability to effect and transform constitutes the performative's internal structure; it is its "manifest function and destination."[189] Fourth, the analysis of the performative is free of "the authority of the truth value, from the true/false opposition." In its stead is the "value of force." Performatives are analyzed according to their illocutionary or perlocutionary force, loosely defined as the intended effect of the speech act.[190] The significance of the performative and this particular set of attributes is that they disrupt the predetermined and rigorously constrained concept of communication that is "already constituted and dominated by an orientation toward truth."[191]

Derrida's reading of performatives offers several insights for thinking of the coming of freedom as performative event. While the discussion of communication may be a bit removed from the subject of freedom, the tendencies to neglect plurality of meaning in favor of predetermined and univocal concepts, and the centrality of convention and context to enforce discursive limitations resonate with the aforementioned problems facing freedom's arrival. Also, the disruption performatives bring to communication parallel fittingly to the kind of interventions the coming of freedom made. First, the proclamation of something akin to freedom was unable to hold any predetermined unity of meaning. The very declarations of emancipation and abolition set in motion trials and practices of freedom that disrupted any singular concept of what freedom was intended to mean for the masses of enslaved black Americans. As news spread throughout the South, there were

those who abandoned plantations, and there were those who remained. For some, it was an opportunity to fight, wielding bayonet or serving in the Union army; for others, it was a chance to reunite with and build families; and yet others, to travel outside of the county or state. Freedom was not simply the wartime effort for contraband or the abolition of a contestable Southern industry. Freedom meant name changing, itineracy, choosing loyalty, choosing independence, seizing lands, ownership, family, learning, work, delinquency, community, self-reliance. There was no controlling what freedom would mean to the millions of the formerly enslaved.

Second, the coming of freedom must be thought of as an operation more so than a series of legal pronouncements of the new status of black Americans. This is to say that the arrival of freedom was an active process, one of continual movement, which produced what freedom looked like as it went along. For example, the Thirteenth Amendment declared black Americans free by way of the abolition of slavery. However, it did not take long to realize that something was lacking; to no longer be enslaved did not equate to being free. If slavery was a system of social alienation or even, arguably, of social death, then abolition did nothing to address the gap between black and white in America. To end a system that held black Americans in exclusion would, at best, release them from the hold. But this was a release into an unnamed suspension, existing in a state no longer defined by ontological alienation but now by refusal and rejection. It is in this state of suspension, of no longer holding the status of slave and not recognized as a free social being that the construction of the criminal as black is solidified. The masses of freed black Americans had no identity to a postwar white South. The black male as criminal quickly became the response not to the question "who are these masses of freed people?" but to the question "what is the status of the former slaves?"[192] So the Fourteenth Amendment was an attempt to address what the freedom of the Thirteenth Amendment left incomplete. Theoretically, citizenship would bring inclusion and a semblance of equality under the law between white Americans and black Americans. However, in practice, the conferral of citizenship could not force inclusion and, without this recognition, its privileges and immunities were of little effect. Citizenship was in name only in that it did little to affect the material reality of black life and black Americans would remain, in large part, powerless to legally combat white rule. This created the necessity for the Fifteenth Amendment. The franchise for black men was the means to participate in the in civil and political society and the power to effect black standing in local life. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments must be considered collectively, together constituting the ongoing process of producing a more complete freedom for black Americans. The coming of freedom necessitated the movement from abolition to citizenship to the franchise.

Third, the arrival of freedom revolutionized the nation socially, economically, politically, and culturally in ways that challenged America unlike ever before. The composition of the nation was transformed; the very meanings of freedom harkening back to the revolutionary period were revised—because the abolition of slavery and the legal allowance of black inclusion demanded they be. There was no American precedent for this coming of freedom, no referent outside of itself.[193] As a result, the performative possibilities of what the coming of freedom could mean was not limited by any past occasion. Fourth, the coming of freedom was an act of force in that it did not entertain questions that pretended to concern itself with matter of truth. In time, for the most part,

the arrival of freedom, put to rest the old questions of "Is the Negro a man?" or "Should the Negro be set free?" or "Is it possible for white and black to coexist?"[194] The arrival of freedom made these things happen. The formerly enslaved were freed, made citizen under the same flag and in the same land as white Americans, and granted the political power to participate in his own governance. These four reasons demonstrate the force of the coming of freedom. And even though this force is immanent in freedom's arrival, its performative possibility is curtailed in the effort to successfully contextualize the meaning of freedom.

In Derrida's reading of the performative, he praises Austin for what performative utterances are capable of carrying out by force and criticizes Austin for his analysis of performatives. Derrida builds his critique with the following observations and assessments. Austin's analyses "at all times require a value of *context*, and even of a context exhaustively determined, in theory or teleologically." Everything about the performative event, including the potential infelicities which may befall it, all come back to an element in what Austin calls the "total context." This element, according to Derrida, is consciousness—"the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act."[195] At this point, what makes the performative utterance disruptive to the concept of communication is in jeopardy. If the performative is the communication of an original movement that is able to produce or transform a situation in ways whose meaning has no referent, then a consciousness driven overdetermination of context subjects the performative to the communication of an intentional meaning. What this conscious and intentional presence implies for Derrida is that no residue escapes the present totalization. That is, nothing is to escape the horizon of the unity of meaning; there is no excess, no remainders of possibility in context, form, the semantic determination of words, or the definition of requisite conventions—there is no polysemy, no variance in dissemination.[196]

But why all the restraint? For Derrida, part of the issue with Austin's analysis is that he misreads the success/failure opposition in performatives. Accompanying every performative is the chance for it to fail; the things that could be wrong and the things that go wrong are always present as a possibility. According to Austin, the possibility of the failure or infelicity of a performative utterance is a structural possibility, an "ill to which *all* acts are heir."[197] As a result, in the effort to prevent the chance of their failure, Austin provides an outline of the necessary conditions for the success of performatives. In response to this, Derrida writes, "Through the values of 'conventional procedure', 'correctness', and 'completeness', which occur in the definition, we necessarily find once more those of an exhaustively definable context, of a free consciousness present to the totality of the operation, and of absolutely meaningful speech master of itself: the teleological jurisdiction of an entire field whose organizing center remains *intention.*"[198] The problem Derrida has with Austin's procedure is that despite Austin's acknowledgment of the possibility of failure as structural to performatives—that infelicity is an "essential risk of the operation"—he attempts to regulate the performative by excluding this risk as accidental and exterior to its action. To this point, Derrida calls out Austin's misreading of the success/failure opposition: if a possibility is always possible, it must be considered a necessary possibility. And if the necessary possibility of infelicity is recognized, it cannot yet constitute an accident or be excluded as exterior. So, what is success when the possibility of infelicity continues to constitute its very structure?[199]

Derrida's critique of Austin offers ways of thinking analytically about what constitutes the success of a performative, the anxiety motivating the need to regulate the performative, and the role consciousness assumes in the totality of the operation. What, then, does all of this mean for the project of evaluating the coming of freedom as performative event? For one, the discussion about the success or failure of the coming of freedom becomes a lot more complicated. How is the success of freedom determined? What is the evidence of success? What are the conditions designating the appropriateness of freedom? To what degree does appropriateness equate to success? What interests are being served when the success of freedom is determined in one way rather than another? And then, what constitutes failure? Is the determination of the failure of freedom the same for radical Republican idealists as for conservative former abolitionists as for formerly enslaved black Americans? These questions are questions of context, revealing how fraught the definition of freedom is. More importantly, they suggest that the object of our scrutiny is not the definition of freedom but the determination of the contexts regulating the permissions and limitations of freedom in theory and practice. Additionally, to analyze the coming of freedom as both a transformative force and as unfulfilled is not to read contradiction but to identify the problem of consciousness within the regulatory reach of context, reeling in and excluding any performative possibility of freedom outside of what it is intended to be. The conscious presence of intention did more to restrict the event of the coming of freedom than the racial backlash countering freedom's arrival. To get back to the original concerns at the beginning of this chapter, what makes *The Souls of Black Folk* the type of response to the coming of freedom that it is lies in DuBois' engagement with this contextual consciousness more so than with any disappointment with a particular definition of freedom. DuBois uses *Souls* as the occasion to excavate the problem which renders the coming of freedom unfulfilled and explain how that same problem persists into the twentieth century, jeopardizing the very health of the nation and its ideals.

We begin again with the statement: "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." This time, DuBois uses this clause to open the second chapter in *Souls*, "Of the Dawn of Freedom." Here is the opening at length:

> The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in American and the islands of the sea. It was a phase of this problem that caused the Civil War; and however much they who marched South and North in 1861 may have fixed on the technical points of union and local autonomy as a shibboleth, all nevertheless knew, as we know, that the question of Negro slavery was the real cause of the conflict. Curious it was, too, how this deeper question ever forced itself to the surface despite effort and disclaimer. No sooner had Northern armies touched Southern soil than this old question, newly guised, sprang from the earth,—What shall be done with Negroes? Peremptory military commands, this way and that, could not answer the query; the Emancipation Proclamation seemed but to broaden and intensify the difficulties; and the War Amendments made the Negro problems of today.[200]

The problem of the twentieth century did not begin in the twentieth century. According to DuBois, it was present earlier, in a different phase and across different lands. If, perchance, the problem of the color line is able to traverse the conditions of time, location, and demographic, then it is of interest why DuBois begins an assessment of the twentieth century iteration of the problem in the 1860s, at the moment of the dawn of freedom for black Americans. Two propositions are worth considering here. One, by drawing a connection between the coming of freedom and the problem of the twentieth century, DuBois claims a sort of dual-causality between the two such that the color line engenders the problems of freedom's arrival and the coming of freedom induces the twentieth century problem of the color line. Two, if the problem of the color line is able to transgress conditions of time and location and bring social division between races when and where it emerges, then it is worth considering the possibility that this problem is able also to inform historical contexts. To say it more succinctly, we must take seriously the probability of the problem of racial prejudice creating the conditions for freedom and its arrival. To open "Of the Dawn of Freedom" in this way, DuBois places the official, national coming of freedom for black Americans and the problem of the color line side by side, establishing a kind of mutuality, an ideological coexistence blurring the problems of the past, the solutions of the present, and the concerns of the future. The problem of the color line may have very well begat the coming of freedom just as much as the coming of freedom begat the twentieth century problem of the color line. This creates a classic causality dilemma, one that positions the coming of freedom as a problem itself, accentuating, and even perhaps augmenting the problem of the color line. So, it matters that DuBois begins his analysis of the problem of the twentieth century in 1861 because something went awry at the dawn of freedom that would allow for the phase of the problem America would struggle with throughout the following century. Also, by assessing the coming of freedom in this way, perhaps some insight or something productive can be gained to mitigate the problem of the century ahead.

The dawn of freedom begins with a question—or rather *that* question, old, multiform, newly guised—"What shall be done with Negroes?" This was a carryover question, the question of slavery, America's great social question to obscure the darkness of misery and necessity.[201] And despite the radical fervor of emancipation and its aftermath, this was the question the dawn of freedom could not answer. This unanswerability would lead to difficulties, difficulties which would only broaden and intensify, difficulties that would then turn into problems black Americans would face some forty years later. What is it about this question that presents such a challenge to freedom? In what ways does this question impact the kind of freedom that dawns? What does this question have to do with the problem of the color line? First, we must recognize that the question "What shall be done with Negroes?" is a question of excess.

In DuBois' reading of the coming of freedom, for him to place this question at the start of freedom's arrival for black Americans suggests that the realization of freedom was challenged because it was unable to address the problem the question of slavery was purposed to contain. This question of and about excess betrays a certain anxiety about freedom and about that which has been made excess. In this opening paragraph to "Of the Dawn of Freedom," DuBois offers several observational lines of inquiry concerning the coming of freedom and the ways the problem of race complicates freedom's arrival.

Following these lines can, perhaps, reveal the forces at work in freedom's nonfulfillment and elucidate what it is DuBois contests in the coming of freedom.

Firstly, when freedom shows up—in the form of Union soldiers in the South, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Reconstruction Amendments—it is impetuous, disruptive, inchoate, and mostly unprepared. DuBois does not juxtapose freedom and slavery here but the coming of freedom with the question of slavery or, the question of what to do with the Negro. Perhaps, this is where the coming of freedom proves so ineffective and problematic for the future of black Americans. The means by which freedom appeared was ill-equipped to deal with the social question that slavery seemed to keep in check. Slavery was the institutional and ideological repository for all that the American cultural imagination wanted to exclude; it was the hold that manufactured race, that made 'black' the refuse of American life; it was the cover that would, theoretically, contain misery, necessity, destitution, and abjection from infecting American sociality. If the coming of freedom meant the destruction of chattel slavery as an institution, then what would come of all that slavery attempted to hold in place? This is the question the coming of freedom could not answer. And whether it be emancipation or the legal right to citizenship or the suffrage, the coming of freedom did not and could not address the disruption of all that was, for so long, contained within and because of slavery.

Secondly, to frame the coming of freedom for black Americans with the question of excess is to call out the implicit logic constructing black as excess. If the question is old and has seen many forms, so too is the accompanying logic of black as excess. The very construct of the black, the Negro, which emerges because of slavery, is developed as that which is excess. To be black, as Achille Mbembe describes it, is to be "the Remainder—the ultimate sign of the dissimilar, of difference and the pure power of the negative—constitut[ing] the manifestation of existence as an object." He goes on to say, "The Black Man, a sign in excess of all signs and therefore fundamentally unrepresentable, was the ideal example of this other-being, powerfully possessed by emptiness, for whom the negative had ended up penetrating all moments of existence—the death of the day, destruction and peril, the unnameable right of the world."[202] Black and blackness was simultaneously the site of emptiness and overabundance, evacuation and gluttony.[203] The theft of bodies and the crimes against flesh created a palimpsest of being; any being prior to the mark of black, of Negro, is effaced, written over, and "loaded with mythical prepossession." The result is what Hortense Spillers calls a "signifying property *plus,*" a split subject buried beneath "layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by a particular historical order."[204] The coming of freedom's inability to comprehend and address the construct of black excess as a problem is where it fails. Freedom made no provision for cutting through the layers of excess meaning. Neither emancipation nor citizenship were successful in rectifying black as the remainder, the necessary negative. The coming of freedom did not undo the markings scarred on the captive body. But to be clear, it did not because it could not. Freedom asked the same question slavery did. The way freedom arrived, it had neither the language nor the discursive flexibility to imagine black life as anything other than excess. And so freedom confirmed the indelibility of the marks; black would continue to be the remainder, the site of excess. Per Spillers, "Even though the captive flesh/body has been 'liberated', and no one need pretend that even the quotation marks do not *matter*, dominant symbolic activity, the

ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation, remains grounded in the originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography and its topics, shows movement, as the human subject is 'murdered' over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise."[205]

Thirdly, according to the opening paragraph to "Dawn," we must consider this question of excess as a function of the color line. It is the color line that asks "what shall be done with Negroes?", that continues to mark black as negative and excess despite the abolition of slavery, and that makes the coming of freedom seem more of a catalyst for rather than a solution to the difficulties black Americans face. DuBois' argument is that the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men is the central problem of past, present, and future. The implication to consider is that the color line is the context for the coming of freedom—it provides the parameters, the limits, the rules for freedom; it overdetermines what freedom can mean, how it should arrive, and the extent to which black Americans are allowed to lay claim to it. The trouble with freedom's arrival is not only that it was imagined incompletely, executed amateurishly, and forsaken prematurely. According to DuBois, the problem cannot be understood within the usual slavery versus freedom nexus of contention. The real problem with the coming of freedom is the totalizing context of the color line and the telos directing its operations. Everything about the coming of freedom for black Americans—the question, the anxiety, the underlying rationality, the layers of meaning, the necessity for a Remainder, the endless disguise—everything depended on and aligned with the telos long defining the nation's own quest for freedom: the continued exclusion of black men and women from American civic and social life.

What I am wanting to explain here is the nature of the coexistence between freedom and racial prejudice. To follow DuBois' claim in "Dawn," that the coming of freedom for black Americans was compromised before it was even set in motion, is to read freedom according to the telos of the continued exclusion of black people and black life from American social life. This is not say that Emancipation and Reconstruction together was an elaborate political and social ruse. As DuBois is careful to explain in the remainder of "Dawn," the Freedmen's Bureau as a branch of the federal government was a "great human institution"—well-meaning, overwhelmed, and under supported, plagued with internal problems and external challenge, and which collapsed under the weight of its broad responsibilities. Nevertheless, despite its greatness, despite its efforts and policies, DuBois closes the essay with the sobering account that the "most perplexing and persistent of the Negro problems" is yet to be solved, that "despite compromise, war and struggle, the Negro is not free," and that the legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau is "the work it did not do because it could not."[206] As DuBois demonstrates, reading freedom according to this telos of black exclusion requires being critical of freedom policies and legislation, as well as the ways government attempts to ensure and protect the freedom of its citizenry. How transformative would the suffrage be, how revolutionary its significance, if "the granting of the ballot to the black man was a necessity, the very least a guilty nation could grant a wronged race, and the only method of compelling the South to accept the results of war?" How freeing would enfranchisement be, and how enduring that freedom, when "Negro suffrage ended a civil war by beginning a race feud?"[207] "Of the Dawn of Freedom" is as much a history of the Freedmen's Bureau as it is a critique of the freedom they sought to

provide and protect for black Americans. As much as its organizational flaws and ideological shortcomings contributed to its demise, the Bureau did not do the reconstructive work of developing prospective citizenship and ensuring the practice of freedom for freedmen and freedwomen because its entire operation revolved around the question, "What shall be done with Negroes?"

Attempts to address problems of race and social condition while neglecting the question of excess not only make for inadequate policy, it also allows for the coexistence, even the proliferation, of racial prejudice and discriminatory exclusion within the very efforts intended to combat such problems. DuBois' critique in "Dawn," of the Bureau specifically and of the government-instituted coming of freedom generally, suggest that the failure of freedom policy does not begin with its vexed execution but with the problematic ways in which freedom is imagined. What are the conditions of freedom's possibility? What are the boundaries of its probability? What is the banner, the prize, the demonstrative evidence of freedom? What is thought to be or, really, who is feared to be the problem jeopardizing freedom? With each of these questions, to what degree does America's problem of anti-black prejudice inform what it means to be and who is entitled to be free? To read the coming of freedom against the telos of black exclusion is to consider the extent to which the freedom that arrived with Emancipation and Reconstruction is contextualized by color prejudice—that is, it is constrained by the color line and overdetermined by racial anxiety. To this point, when DuBois addresses the effect the color line has on black American consciousness in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," he is also addressing the manner in which the problem of racial anxiety rendered the coming of freedom incomplete and without force.

If there is ever a tropological binary characterizing *The Souls of Black Folk*, it is the dualism between the promise and the problem. At the dawn of the twentieth century, black and white Americans stood before the promise of modernity: a new era, new economies and technologies, new cultural heights and social progressivism, and, perhaps most significantly, the emergence of America as the new most-powerful global empire in the world. Likewise, at the dawn of the twentieth century, black and white Americans stood before the problem of the color line. This was the same problem responsible for the past devastation of civil war and the same problem that would define the concerns of the entire upcoming century. In front of black Americans was the promise of opportunity: opportunities of culture, education, property ownership; the opportunity to attain those inalienable rights the world accords to men; the opportunity to be recognized by white Americans as co-citizen, cultural co-worker, as brother. Likewise, in front of black Americans also was the problem of social separation. DuBois would describe this problem as creating two separate worlds, "separate not simply in the higher realms of social intercourse, but also in church and school, on railway and street-car, in hotels and theatres, in streets and city sections, in books and newspapers, in asylums and jails, in hospitals and graveyards." According to DuBois, "the separation is so thorough and deep that it absolutely precludes for the present between the races anything like that sympathetic and effective group-training and leadership of the one by the other, such as the American Negro and all backward peoples must have for effectual progress."[208] In *Souls*, these promises of modernity and opportunity are each founded upon another, more foundational promise:

the promise of freedom. This promise would entail citizenship, political power, and what DuBois describes as "the freedom of life and limb, to work and think, and to love and aspire."[209] And likewise, this promise would have to contend with a problem. For DuBois, slavery is not the problem opposing the promise of freedom but racial prejudice. While the problem of racial prejudice would allow for abolition and citizenship and the franchise, it would also give rise to the debilitating double-consciousness infecting black subjectivity, justify the disfranchisement of freedmen and freedwomen, and stymie the intellectual and cultural development of black Americans. The terms of freedom were not nullified and the conditions constituting American freedom for freedmen and freedwomen remained intact. The problem of racial prejudice was effective not in its ability to overturn the provisions of freedom but in the ways it qualified these provisions, manipulating the circumstantial, contextual conditions after which black Americans must continually strive but must never fulfill.

Notwithstanding this dualism, the tension between the problem and the promise is not entirely antagonistic in *Souls*. In "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," perhaps more so than in any other essay in the collection, DuBois engages the problem and the promise as entangled entities, each embroiled in the various sociopolitical ruptures, adjustments, and processes between emancipation and the turn of century, and both converging on the site of black consciousness. What is novel about one (of the many) contributions DuBois makes in "Strivings" is the way he reads the promise of the coming of freedom in proximity to the problem of racial prejudice. When the distinction between the two becomes blurry, it allows for ways of reading the coming of freedom through the lens of the color line and reading racial segregation as a function of American liberty. As a result of this blurred proximity, it is worth asking: in what ways does DuBois' skepticism of a definitive line distinguishing the promise of freedom and the problems of race and social condition suggest the possibility of the problem drifting into the promise? To what extent is there synonymity between the two such that the promise becomes the problem? I have been building toward the claim that as a result of the highly regulated contextualization of the coming of freedom, not only do emancipation and Reconstruction remain unfulfilled as performative events, but also the coming of freedom, *imagined in this way*, becomes a problem for black people and black life in America. Position is everything here. What DuBois shows in "Strivings" is that from the vantage of the black spiritual world, it is possible to read the multiple ways the meaning of freedom change and the logic according to which these changes are contextualized. From this position, what is problem and what is promise does not appear so clear.

> DuBois begins "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" with the problem:
> Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the

boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question,

How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.[210]

Immediately, the reader is introduced to a problem. It is mapped onto the narrative first person and presented in the form of a question, which itself remains unasked and is tempered by a certain social uneasiness. However, upon closer inspection, it seems rather clear that the feature in this paragraph is not the black subject as problem but the theatrics around asking the black subject how it feels to be a problem. This opening scene is the scene of the question. Everything mentioned here—the subjects, their positions, the dynamics of subject interaction, the language mediating this interaction, the structures of feeling framing the dialogue—is configured according to the underlying logic of the question. And so, paralleling the difference between those seemingly polite and problematic statements and the real unasked question, DuBois opens "Strivings" with a distinction between what is assumed to be the Negro problem and what he will explain as the real social problem plaguing the nation.

It is a curious thing that an unasked question exists between the position of the narrative "me" and the position of the "other world." The first person point of view DuBois writes with here is not in an autobiographical capacity but as a representative voice of those within the Veil; it is a first person account from the vantage of the black spiritual world.[211] Conversely, the vague, nondescript, no-named "they" from the "other world" represent the position of those outside the Veil, the white world, the other Americans from whom the black Americans are different. Of all the things one would think to be the cause of separation between the black and white worlds—from pseudoscientific claims about the non- or sub-humanity of black people, to social scientific explanations of black inferiority, to legal justifications for racial segregation—DuBois claims that the two are held apart by an unasked question. There are a number of things to take into account concerning this claim. That the question can exist without being asked suggests that it can also exist independent of the utterance of any particular speaker. Therefore, the separation that comes by way of the question cannot be attributable to, say, Justice Henry Brown when he states in the *Plessy v Ferguson* majority opinion, "if he be a colored man…he has been deprived of no property, since he is not lawfully entitled to the reputation of being a white man"; or to Booker T. Washington when he says, "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers."[212] There is something else—not a person, a subject position, nor an utterance—occupying the space of the "between," shaping the ways in which the white world interacts with the black world and influencing the very language whereby this interaction is mediated. And so, to borrow from Derrida, between me and the other world there remains consciousness: "the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act."[213] This consciousness functions as an organizing logic that can remain unspoken and yet contextualize racial discourse about the world within the Veil. In this way, "how does it feel to be a problem?" is much more than a question that is meant to be but does not get asked. The intention in this question reveals the designs and purpose of the consciousness that poses it. What is said and what is done about the world on the other side of the separation is framed according to these designs. This is to say that the terms of racial engagement are contextualized by the social and cultural knowledge that is produced about the black subject by this governing consciousness. These terms are always present, always mediating the dialogue between the world without the Veil and the world within the

Veil, no matter how sympathetically or compassionately the position of the white world engages racial discourse about the black world. The totality of the speech act is contextualized by this conscious design. This refers to not only the utterance itself but the broader practices of speaking across the color line, which include: the feelings of delicacy and difficulty influencing what is to be said, the evasive and fluttering language characterizing what is uttered, the half-hesitancy in approach, and that curious convention of making declarative statements to and about the black world when one really means to ask a question.

To be clear, although the unasked question is situated between the black world and the white world, it is not a question of mutual relation. It simply is not contextualized in a way that allows the black subject to ask of the white world how it feels to be a problem. Therefore, the question, and the consciousness devising the question, is not a bridge connecting the two worlds but the catalyzing framework that reads black as different from white. As a social framework, "how does it feel to be a problem?" operates according to a defined relation of power between black and white. From the position of the white subject, the black world is the object of his scrutiny. And no matter the feelings of delicacy or compassion, knowledge about this constructed and objectified world does not seem to exist outside the definition of problem. So, from DuBois' first person perspective within the Veil, what is the black subject to do? On the surface, he responds; he meets what the occasion requires. But in the exchange of niceties for awkwardness, the real question remains, mostly, unanswered. And perhaps, this is because the real question is not really a question at all. Rather, it is a statement, a construction of black as problem. And what does one say to this unspoken, unasked assumptive truth? How does one understand what it means to be black when the very terms of explanation and the lens of difference between black and white are always already governed and conditioned to read black as problem?

This is the strange meaning of being black at the dawn of the twentieth century. It is the peculiar experience of being made a problem. It is the stark awareness of difference between black boys and white girls; it is the realization that to be black is not only to be different from white but also to be shut out from their world by a vast veil. It is contending with the strife, sycophancy, hatred, distrust, self-doubt, and isolation resultant of the veil that is the prison-house of black life.[214] As DuBois alludes to in "The Forethought," to apprehend the strange meaning of being black in America is to begin to apprehend the problem of the twentieth century. What we find in the opening pages of "Strivings" is DuBois working to show that the meaning of being black is strange not because of anything inherent to blackness. Rather, it is the unspoken claim to a fundamental difference, the space of the between holding black apart from white, and the intention of the consciousness which defines the black world as problem that makes the experience of being black such a peculiar experience. And so, in this opening scene, which is the scene of the question, DuBois makes the claim that the problem of the color line, which is the problem of the twentieth century, is the problem of the unasked question.

The conditions producing the question "how does it feel to be a problem?" are themselves fallacious. At issue is not the object of the question but the question itself. And the threat to the nation, the problem that troubles its promise, is the obsession to scrutinize the black world without scrutinizing the consciousness—the unspoken, organizing logic—which requires constructing the black world as problem and that governs the language,

practices, feelings, policies, law, and mores concerning race. In this way, this question is similar to that question of excess in that even in its gesture toward solution, it fails to properly identify the problem. So long as racial discourse is informed by the consciousness which asks without asking "what shall be done with Negroes?" and "how does it feel to be a problem?" there remains a wedge between two worlds within one nation. Regardless of the form these questions take or the purportedly unrelated, nonracial social or economic concerns they may embody, the problem is that the question itself is premised on the separation of black and white; it is the dividing line between the glory of a nation and the abjection of those excluded from that glory; it is the color line between what is imagined as American and what is feared and fantasized as black—as that which is refused and thereby disavowed as American.

Finally, concerning the explanation of the problem facing the nation and facing black Americans DuBois explains in "Strivings," it is necessary to mention double-consciousness. This is the scene of tremendous paradox, where black Americans possess the culture, civility, and history of world civilizations, and yet are denied any true self-consciousness. It is the site where a world history of promise strives against a national history of problem. DuBois writes:

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.[215]

Here, the problem of the color line goes beyond separating black from white. It enables a denial of the history of black civilization, a forgetfulness of a mighty Negro past, and a refusal to acknowledge the gifts black people bring to America and the powers and genius of single black men throughout history.[216] It also creates a conflict of division within the black subject—wherein one feels an unreconciled twoness—between being an American and a Negro. In the struggle to cope with the peculiar sensation of double-consciousness and the conflict of warring ideals, the black subject strives to reconcile an identity he does not know—that is, a soul without true self-consciousness—and an identity that is, at best, a puritanical mirage of bourgeois cultural heteronormativity.[217] And, tragically, this striving, which would be unquestionably hesitant and doubtful, makes the strength of his mighty past lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness.[218]

And so, the problem of the color line begets the problems of black life in America. There is the problem of double-consciousness, which, in the words of Robert Gooding-Williams, "is the false self-consciousness that obtains among African Americans when they observe and judge themselves from the perspective of a white, Jim Crow American world that betrays the ideal of reciprocal recognition due to a contemptuous, falsifying prejudice that inaccurately represents Negro life."[219] There is the problem of exclusion from

American society or, as DuBois says, from the possibility for "a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face."[220] And there is the problem of doubt and disappointment that infects the black spiritual world as a result of this contradiction of double aims.[221] All things considered, we must return to the claim DuBois makes in "Of The Dawn of Freedom." How is it possible that this problem of racial prejudice, and all of its ancillary manifestations, are intensified because of emancipation? How are these challenges to black Americans in the twentieth century created by the Reconstruction Amendments?

When DuBois makes this claim in "In the Dawn of Freedom," his focus is on context, the conditions under which the arrival of freedom in the form of emancipation and Reconstruction occurred. Thus, "Dawn" is a history of the Freedmen's Bureau and it is a critique of the federal government's freedom policies and the provisions of freedom they sought to implement. To read the legacy of the Bureau in this way reveals ways in which even policies intended for the freedom of black Americans can exist within a national telos of black exclusion, and will ultimately fail when governance is either unable or unwilling to address the problem which justifies that exclusion. In other words, DuBois cautions the careful reader to perceive the extent to which the problem infiltrates and infects the execution of the promise. In "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," DuBois establishes a similar relationship between the problem and the promise, although with a different focus. How does one explain the phenomenon that the promise of freedom is not birthed out of a national perseverance despite the problem but is birthed as a child of the problem? That is to say, we are looking at the extent to which the coming of freedom is not the evidence of surviving the problem but the progeny of the problem. In this way, what we are dealing with is an ideal and a certain practice of freedom that extends the life and legacy of the problem it claims to rectify.

Concerning the promise, DuBois says:

> Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain—Liberty; in his tears and curses the God he implored had Freedom in his right hand. At last it came, —suddenly, fearfully, like dream. […] Years have passed away since then,—ten, twenty, forty; forty years of national life, forty years of renewal and development, and yet the swarthy spectre sits in its accustomed seat at the Nation's feast. […] The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people,—a disappointment all the more bitter

because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people.[222]

For black Americans, the promise of freedom is liberty, the land of sweeter beauty; it is relief, that place of rest; it is a seat at the national table, possession of the great unbounded American ideal; and, for the sake of the weary soul's striving, it is the end of all doubt and disappointment. However, the hope of freedom and all it was believed to accomplish, would remain unfulfilled. The culprit: none other than the black hopefuls, consequence of their own ignorance and lowliness. DuBois, pivoting on the shadow of disappointment, draws a line connecting the effect the color line has on black striving, slavery, emancipation, and the operative recuperation of the color line in freedom. In two short paragraphs, centuries of hope were vanquished by that bitter shadow.

But what if the way this hope reads freedom is incorrect? This is not to say that freedom does not entail the things long beseeched in supplication. Rather, what if this expectation of freedom misidentified the problem that was meant to be solved? DuBois suggests a way of thinking critically about the coming of freedom that can only come in retrospection: slavery could not be the root of all prejudice or the cause of all sorrows. How then would one explain systematic disfranchisement, labor exploitation, and the miseducation of black men, women, boys and girls? How would one account for the tribulations inflicted by lynch law and debt peonage? To what would one attribute the impudent blitheness of displaying Sam Hose's knuckles in the shop window along Main Street? Seeing that the solution has failed necessitates going back to reevaluate the problem. With the advantage of forty years hindsight, DuBois exposes one of the greater ironies of the long black freedom struggle. The coming of freedom and all it promised allowed for the problem of the century because it failed to recognize—and thereby failed to address—what was the real, the more subtle and pernicious obstacle to freedom for black folk in America. Despite all of the passion and blood and politics over the banishment of slavery, they all—black and white, North and South, abolitionist and apologist, Republican and Democrat, military and missionary society—they all misidentified the problem and, as a result, imagined a freedom that would not only prove insufficient but would also enable the problem of racial prejudice as the problem of the coming century and beyond. This was the major flaw of the coming of freedom.

The problem was diagnosed based on the fervent and unquestioned desire for freedom to be the solution and for the solution to be freedom. Because the problem of racial prejudice underwriting slavery was understood incompletely, the disruption of emancipation could only address the physical institution holding white and black apart while the problem of the unspoken consciousness remained the norm, continuing to condition the gaze, determine the dialogue, and contextualize the discourse of what is American and what is black. Dred Scott died eighteen months after Justice Taney delivered the court's majority opinion. He died a free man though, due to Taylor Blow purchasing his freedom. But one cannot help wonder: what, to Scott, was the value of the version of freedom he lived for those eighteen months? When, for nearly seven years, he made a case for his freedom and his family's freedom as a man, a political subject, exercising his right to life and liberty and wages, what value does a purchased freedom hold when American jurisprudence refuses him as citizen and human?[223] In those eighteen months of freedom, it is a wonder if Scott entertained the thought that the problem he contended with was not

the laws of chattel slavery but the consciousness that required the separation and fundamental difference between black and white, that anti-black rationality which sought to legislate every thought, word, and deed about and across the color line.

DuBois' project to present to the twentieth century the spiritual world of black Americans and their strivings is, in large part, based on the way he reads the event of freedom's arrival. If, as DuBois claims in "Strivings," the problem of racial prejudice operating through the color line is so invasive in black consciousness, then it is necessary to reevaluate the strivings and ask questions of the hopes—even, or rather, especially the unquestioning faith in freedom. The meaning of being black in America is strange not because black Americans were enslaved but because they are considered free. This is DuBois' critical history of what this freedom meant:

> The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom, the boon that seemed ever barely to elude their grasp, —like a tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp, maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terror of the Ku-Klux-Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watch-word beyond the old cry for freedom. As the time flew, however, he began to grasp a new idea. The ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the Fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting the liberty with which war had partially endowed him. And why not? Had not votes made war and emancipated millions? Had not votes enfranchised the freedmen? Was anything impossible to a power that had done all this? A million black men started with renewed zeal to vote themselves into the kingdom. So the decade flew away, the revolution of 1876 came, and left the half-free serf weary, wondering, but still inspired. Slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power, —a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day. It was the ideal of "book-learning"; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life.[224]

What DuBois offers is a different kind of history of the forty year long coming of freedom. Such a history features the strivings, the hopes and aspirations, the struggle, the strife internal to the soul life of black Americans. Even if DuBois' emphasis is on black strivings in the name of freedom, it becomes clear that the circuitousness of the pursuit of freedom is reflective of the precariousness of freedom itself. The version of freedom offered up decade after decade was conditioned by a consciousness of the line. The quest for freedom was, on one hand, the quest to claim what was rightfully deserved and, on the other hand, the quest

to account for what black Americans lacked in relation to white Americans. If the promise of freedom proposed a solution to the burden of slavery and its effects, then the iterative revisions of the meaning of freedom introduces the possibility of its failure. As the criteria determining freedom are in constant flux, construed more broadly and then more narrowly, the satisfaction of any fulfillment or possession of the freedom ideal for black American is in perpetual deferment.

Even in the discussion of the promise, it is impossible to avoid the problem and its interminability. As DuBois walks through the iterations of hope in the promise of freedom and disappointment in the nonfulfillment of the promise, he is also ultimately describing the obstinance of the problem in the face of freedom victories. Likewise, as much as DuBois' account of how black Americans respond to the vagaries of freedom's arrival explains their spiritual strivings, it also explains just how adept the discursive operations of the problem are. Concerning the promise, the different watchwords for freedom do not track an evolution or broadening of the freedom ideal. Here, what is freedom is manipulated. The versions of freedom are, according to DuBois, "oversimple and incomplete, —the dreams of a credulous race childhood, or the fond imaginings of the other world which does not know and does not want to know our power."[225] In DuBois' description of the coming of freedom, the forty year journey seem almost choreographed—orchestrated concessions and recoupments, advances and co-optations—wherein freedom remains the vague, nevertheless quintessentially American ideal, promised and available to all, always within reach and yet always without reach. With his attention to a myopic hope in a manipulated freedom and strivings that are encumbered by the shadow of prejudice, DuBois recognizes that the resolution to this striving may not be in this amorphous ideal called freedom after all.

For DuBois, there has to be something more. And so his conviction is this: the search for freedom and its concomitant efforts for political power, civil rights and protections, education, and meaningful work all work toward a greater, a "vaster ideal": "the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race [...] the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack."[226] This is a statement of the gift of black folks, as well as the gift of white folks. This is DuBois making a case for the quintessential Americanness of black American life. This is a case for seeing the race problem as an American problem and not the black person as problem or the problem black people suffer because of the pathology of blackness. This is DuBois making a case that the problem of the color line, of there being a "between" separating the black subject and the other world, is solved not by freedom itself but by brotherhood. Without the recognition of the unifying ideal, the striving for freedom would remain incomplete and the problem infecting freedom itself would not be addressed. And so freedom is in service of human brotherhood or, striving for freedom is in service of the greater striving toward human brotherhood. In the name of this vaster ideal, the traits and talents of black Americans are to be developed in conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic. Freedom comes at the cost of conformity, conformity to "greater ideals" that are themselves constructed and subjected to conditionality and the anxiety to expel that which is regarded as excess.

DuBois brings us to the limitations of this unbounded ideal of freedom. To question that which we have long esteemed as solution, particularly those things lodged in the national imagination as a core value, a primordial ideal, the object of centuries of decades, and now centuries, of struggle, invites the slipperiest of slopes. What would it mean to think about freedom as problem, especially in a climate where the everyday freedoms of people of color are already daily encroached upon and, in some cases, completely vanquished? DuBois' *Souls of Black Folk* is not directly about freedom. *Souls* is a text about the problem black Americans face in a nation corrupted by racial prejudice, and the multiple ways black folk live and die all the while striving in this American world. But if the problem exists—and is even exacerbated—in the lives of black Americans, who, legally, are just as free as those across the divide, then there is something amiss about that freedom. Freedom fell short in its ability to contend with the consciousness ordering the system of slavery and that would justify the system of Jim Crow segregation. DuBois does not present a solution for a reworked or broader freedom in *Souls*. Instead, he turns to recognition as a precondition for freedom—a project that would lead to disillusionment and a contorted conformity to American standards which, themselves, reinforce the conditions of racial prejudice.

By making the claim that the coming of freedom failed, it is not to say that abolition, citizenship, and enfranchisement failed. It is to say the ways in which freedom was imagined and terms with which it arrived post-Civil War are implicated in the continued rejection and disavowal of black life in America. It is necessary to imagine freedom differently than according to the terms with which it arrived. Perhaps, to understand the coming of freedom for black Americans as failure would allow for more critical and insightful ways of thinking about the possibilities and restrictions of the performative capacities of freedom in this ongoing struggle.

Chapter Five

EPILOGUE

This dissertation has been an opportunity for me to begin thinking about the complexities of the relationship black Americans have with the meaning and experience of freedom. The assault against black life witnessed during the Obama presidency and, especially, in the post-Obama years echoes Leon Litwack's question, how free is free?[227] In critical black studies, the influence of Afro-pessimism scholarship has challenged many of us to think about the enduring legacy of slavery, confronting the all too easy sequence from slavery to freedom. In this climate, my interest in the meaning of freedom led me back to the nineteenth century and the events constituting the coming of freedom for black Americans. Emancipation, the abolition of slavery, citizenship, and enfranchisement have been long-esteemed victories in black American and in national history. And they are. However, to resign freedom to these events is to assent to a grossly incomplete freedom. Not only that, each of these hallmarks of freedom came at exorbitantly high costs to black life. The narratives from Annie Davis and Nancy Johnson are but two examples of many—two examples that do not tell stories of the racially-motivated violence, rape, and murder at the hands of Union and Confederate soldiers; or of the reconstitution of exploitative labor practices in Union army camps; or of the sickness, proliferation of disease, and death in Union contraband camps as a result of conditions of neglect and the withholding of proper care to children, the elderly and women. The abandonment of black Americans that Frederick Douglass feared would happen with the compromise to end Reconstruction indeed happened. Abolition gave way to new forms of slave labor with the rampant imprisonment of black men as criminality was reconstituted around blackness, and the system of debt peonage held free black labor in bondage. Citizenship did not facilitate the integration of black Americans into American civic and political life. Rather, it led to greater exclusion and the calcification of racial segregation that would define the entirety of twentieth century and beyond. Black enfranchisement, the symbol of black political power, would produce an excessively violent reaction, a wave of terror, that sought to keep black people "in their place"—a cause normalized, even celebrated throughout the South, so as to argue the expendability and disposability of black life. At what price do these freedom victories become losses? At what point are these achievements counted as failures? If the cost of freedom exacts so much, when is it no longer considered gain?

In a strangely ironic way, I have found myself working toward an understanding of freedom in this project by way of the problems it presents rather than the promises it makes. Booker T. Washington saw the coming of freedom as a problem for most black Americans, particularly in the South. Emancipation thrust them into a world with no training, no knowledge of how to be independent, no understanding of the priorities a self-sufficient people ought to possess. As a result, Washington developed a practical politics of freedom emphasizing responsibility, respectability, and self-reliant economic uplift. In his accommodation of social segregation in the name of a self-help policy that would hopefully

lead to economic independence, Washington's philosophy also taught the centrality of compromise in the struggle for freedom. Without question, there are significant limitations to Washington's school of thought and his understanding of freedom has led to new sets of problems for black Americans but his contributions to black political thought and the black nationalist tradition continues to shape discussions around race and freedom today.

For W.E.B. DuBois, it would be his study of the failure of the coming of freedom—the disconnect between what emancipation meant for black Americans and what they experienced, the inability of the government to uphold black political and economic rights, and the social separation of the races—that informed his diagnosis of racial prejudice as a national social problem and development of a black politics that would both counter the problem of the color line and lead to the social and political advancement of the black masses. One of DuBois' biggest contributions in *Souls*, naming the problem of double consciousness, has emphasized the significance of the pursuit of true self-consciousness to the black freedom struggle. *Souls* added a critical nuance in the way we think about freedom by unhinging it from being locked in dialectical binary with slavery, and understanding the ways the much older, more global, less visible, more elusive problem of racial prejudice obstructs the realization of what it means to be black and free in America.

To read the coming of freedom as problem, or as an incomplete project, or as failure allows for ways of thinking critically about our relationship to freedom and asking necessary questions about what we mean when we talk of pursuing or protecting or fighting for freedom. To do so also provides occasion for shifting focus from asking what particular groups of people need to do to be free, to evaluating the ways our understanding of freedom work to deny or restrict the experience of freedom by others. Despite our esteem of freedom as an inalienable right—and depending on the political situation, sometimes a human right—constructions of freedom in Enlightenment-derivative modern intellectual thought has significant limitations. The point is not to disavow freedom but to challenge our acceptance of it as we know it. The ideal of freedom is as much as what we believe it to be as it is an ideological tool wielded for the enslavement of others. It is both a boon and a snare. As such, the study of freedom requires considering the ways even inalienability is constituted to serve the interest of some at the expense of others. In this way, the dissonance between the meaning and practice of freedom so evident in America's past and present is productive, in that it reveals the interests of not only the ways people make claims for freedom but also of the ideal of freedom itself. It is enough for the long and multifarious movement we think of as the black freedom struggle to be wary of striving for the same freedom championed in the American national imagination. In all of this, the point is not to depreciate the significance of emancipation and abolition, or citizenship and the suffrage. To think about the problem of freedom is to be critical of the ideal in practice, to accept the victories of the past and acknowledge their limitations, to imagine what it means to be free in ways that are different from terms in which freedom for black Americans has previously come. In short, we cannot think about freedom the ways we have in the past.

Notes

[1] In fact, the debate extended beyond political debates. Silvana Siddali traces the ways pubic discourse around the confiscation legislation provides insight into Northern public opinion's strong commitments to protecting private property rights—even if that included property in slaves—and how that conflicted with the belief in the right of all human beings to be free and enjoy the fruits of their labor. See Siddali, *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).
[2] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[3] Ira Berlin, et.al., *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[4] Implicitly, adult male suffrage was part of the 14th Amendment, mentioning the penalty for any state that denies the right to vote to any of its male inhabitants over the age of 21. Section 2 states: Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State." The House Joint Resolution proposing the 14th amendment to the Constitution, June 16, 1866; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1999; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.
[5] DuBois writes: "For, argued the plain common-sense of the nation, if it is unconstitutional, unpractical, and futile for the nation to stand guardian over its helpless wards, then there is left but one alternative,–to make those wards their own guardians by arming them with the ballot. Moreover, the path of the practical politician pointed the same way; for, argued this opportunist, if we cannot peacefully reconstruct the South with white votes, we certainly can with black votes. So justice and force joined hands.
The alternative thus offered the nation was not between full and restricted Negro suffrage; else every sensible man, black and white, would easily have chosen the latter. It was rather a choice between suffrage and slavery, after endless blood and gold had flowed to sweep human bondage away. Not a single Southern legislature stood ready to admit a Negro, under any conditions, to the polls; not a single Southern legislature believed free Negro labor was possible without a system of restrictions that took all its freedom away; there was scarcely a white man in the South who did not honestly regard Emancipation as a crime, and its practical nullification as a duty. In such a situation, the granting of the ballot to the black man was a necessity, the very least a guilty nation could grant a wronged race, and the only method of compelling the South to accept the results of the war. Thus Negro suffrage ended a civil war by beginning a race feud. And some felt gratitude toward the race

thus sacrificed in its swaddling clothes on the altar of national integrity; and some felt and feel only indifference and contempt."
W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 30-31.
[6] One of the central essays for this group of scholarship is James M. McPherson, "Who Freed the Slaves?" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* Vol. 139, No. 1 (March 1995), 1-10.
[7] Ira Berlin's response paper "Who Freed the Slaves: Emancipation and Its Meaning" offers a rejoinder to McPherson's paper, and represents is one of the leading positions in in this group of scholarship on emancipation. See David Blight and Brooks Simpson, eds., *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 105-122.
[8] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 5.
[9] See Michel-Ralph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013).
[10] I am using Mieke Bal's definitions of terms here: "An *event* is the transition from one state to another state. *Actors* are agents that perform actions. They are not necessarily human. *To act* is defined here as to cause or to experience an event," 5.
[11] DuBois, 63-64. DuBois describes this dialectic formulation in a sketch invoking the entanglement between modernity and race at the opening of the essay "Of the Training of Black Men": "From the shimmering swirl of waters where many, many thoughts ago the slave-ship first saw the square tower of Jamestown, have flowed down to our day three streams of thinking: one swollen from the larger world here and overseas, saying, the multiplying of human wants in culture-lands calls for the world-wide coöperation of men in satisfying them. Hence arises a new human unity, pulling the ends of earth nearer, and all men, black, yellow, and white. The larger humanity strives to feel in this contact of living Nations and sleeping hordes a thrill of new life in the world, crying, "If the contact of Life and Sleep be Death, shame on such Life." To be sure, behind this thought lurks the afterthought of force and dominion,––the making of brown men to delve when the temptation of beads and red calico cloys.
The second thought streaming from the death-ship and the curving river is the thought of the older South,––the sincere and passionate belief that somewhere between men and cattle, God created a tertium quid, and called it a Negro,––a clownish, simple creature, at times even lovable within its limitations, but straitly foreordained to walk within the Veil. To be sure, behind the thought lurks the afterthought,––some of them with favoring chance might become men, but in sheer self-defence we dare not let them, and we build about them walls so high, and hang between them and the light a veil so thick, that they shall not even think of breaking through.
And last of all there trickles down that third and darker thought,––the thought of the things themselves, the confused, half-conscious mutter of men who are black and whitened, crying "Liberty, Freedom, Opportunity––vouchsafe to us, O boastful World, the chance of living men!" To be sure, behind the thought lurks the afterthought,––suppose, after all, the World is right and we are less than men? Suppose this mad impulse within is all wrong, some mock mirage from the untrue?"
[12] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, "Counterhistory and the Anecdote," *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[13] Ira Berlin, et. al, *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series 1, Vol. 1. The Destruction of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 384.
[14] See Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 12-46.
[15] For a study of Lincoln's complicated relationship to slavery, see Eric Foner's *The Fiery Trail: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2010).
[16] Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863; Presidential Proclamations, 1791-1991; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives. The language of the Proclamation is as follows: "By the President of the United States of America:
A Proclamation.
Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:
"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.
"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."
Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:
Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]], and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.
And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.
And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.
And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.
In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.
Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.
By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State."

[17] Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment;* Barbara Fields, "Who Freed the Slaves?," *The Civil War: An Illustrated History*; Michael Hussey & Elizabeth Eder, "It Is My Desire to be Free," *Social Education 74(3)*, 126-130; Harold Holzer, "*The Lincoln Mailbag: America Writes to the President, 1861-1865*.

[18] Martha Jones, "In 1864 Maryland, Confusion Over Emancipation Made Slaves Interpreters of Law," *Huffington Post*, August 25, 2014, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/martha-s-jones/in-1864-maryland-confusio_b_5702706.html

[19] Silvana Siddali, *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862;* John Syrett's *The Civil War Confiscation Acts: Failing to Reconstruct the South*; Louis Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865*.

[20] See James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013). Oakes argues, "Lincoln and the Republicans expected that slaves would run for their freedom if given the chance, and they constructed their antislavery policies on that expectation. They realized that they could not destroy slavery if they did not win the war, and they eventually concluded that they could not win the war unless they reversed decades of federal policy and enlisted tens of thousands of African Americans in the Union army" (22).

[21] In addition to a discussion of Trumbull's proposal and the ideological debates it generated between radical and conservative Republicans, James Oakes provides a detailed representation of political discourse around personhood and property. See Oakes, *Freedom National*, especially 248-324.

[22] *ibid*, 35.

[23] The *one* exception is the one sentence toward the end of the Emancipation Proclamation addressing black violence and labor, which I will discuss later in the chapter.

[24] On the Southern Claims Commission, see Frank Klingberg, *The Southern Claims Commission*, Gary Mills, *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War: The Southern Claims Commission*, Philip Morgan, "The Ownership of Property by Slaves in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Low Country," *The Journal of Southern History,* Vol XLIX, No. 3 (August 1983), 399-420; and to a lesser extent, concerning claims made in South Carolina, John Hammond Moore, "Getting Uncle Sam's Dollars: South Carolinians and the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine,* Vol. 82, No. 3 *(*Jul 1981), 248-262.

[25] The following is Nancy Johnson's testimony in full, reproduced from Berlin, et.al, *Freedom*: *A Documentary History, The Destruction of Slavery*:

"General Interrogatories by Special Com'r-

My name is Nancy Johnson. I was born in Ga. I was a slave and became free when the army came here. My master was David Baggs. I live in Canoochie Creek The claimant is my husband. He was a good Union man during the war. He liked to have lost his life by standing up for the Union party. He was threatened heavy. There was a Yankee prisoner that got away & came to our house at night; we kept him hid in my house a whole day. He sat in my room. White people didn't visit our house then. My husband slipped him over to a man named Joel Hodges & he conveyed him off so that he got home. I saw the man at the time of the raid & I knew him. He said that he tried to keep them from burning my house but he couldn't keep them from taking everything we had. I was sorry for them though a heap. The white people came hunting this man that we kept over night; my old master sent one of his own grandsons & he said if he found it that they must put my husband to death, & I had to tell a story to save life. My old master would have had him killed He was bitter. This was my master David Baggs. I told him that I had seen nothing of him. I did this to save my husbands life. Some of the rebel soldiers deserted & came to our house & we fed them. They were opposed to the war & didn't own slaves & said they would die rather than fight. Those who were poor white people, who didn't own slaves were some of them Union people. I befriended them because they were on our side. I don't know that he ever did any thing more for the Union; we were way back in the country, but his heart was right & so was mine. I was served mighty mean before the Yankees came here. I was nearly frostbitten: my old Missus made me weave to make clothes for the soldiers till 12 o'clock at night & I was so tired & my own clothes I had to spin over night. She never gave me so much as a bonnet. I had to work hard for the rebels until the very last day when they took us. The old man came to me then & said if you won't go away & will work for us we will work for you; I told him if the other colored people were going to be free that I wanted to be. I went away & then came back & my old Missus asked me if I came back to behave myself & do her work & I told her no that I came to do my own work. I went to my own house & in the morning my old master came to me & asked me if I wouldn't go and milk the cows: I told him that my Missus had driven me off–well said he you go and do it– then my Mistress came out again & asked me if I came back to work for her like a "nigger"– I told her no that I was free & she said be off then & called me a stinking bitch. I afterwards wove 40 yds. of dress goods for her that she promised to pay me for; but she never paid me a cent for it. I have asked her for it several times. I have been hard up to live but thank God, I am spared yet. I quit then only did a few jobs for her but she never did anything for me except give me a meal of victuals, you see I was hard up then, I was well to do before the war.'

Second Set of Interrogatories by Spec'l Com'r.

1 I was present when this property was taken.
2 I saw it taken.
3 They said that they didn't believe what I had belonged to me & I told them that I would swear that it belonged to me. I had tried to hide things. They found our meat, it was hid under the house & they took a crop of rice. They took it out & I had some cloth under the house too & the dishes & two fine bed-quilts. They took them out. These were all my own labor & night labor. They took the bole of cloth under the house and the next morning they came back with it made into pantaloons. They were starved & naked almost. It was Jan & cold, They were on their way from Savannah. They took all my husbands clothes, except what he had on his back.
4 These things were taken from David Bagg's place in Liberty County. The Yankees took them. I should think there were thousands of them. I could not count them. They were about a day & a night
5 There were present my family, myself & husband & this man Jack Walker. He is way out in Tatnal Co. & we can't get him here
6 There were what we called officers there. I don't know whether they ordered the property taken. I put a pot on and made a pie & they took it to carry out to the head men. I went back where the officers camped & got my oven that I cooked it in back again. They must have ordered them or else they could not have gone so far & they right there. They said that they stood in need of them. They said that we ought not to care what they took for we would get it all back again; that they were obliged to have something to eat. They were mighty fine looking men.
7 They took the mare out of the stable; they took the bacon under the house, the corn was taken out of the crib, & the rice & the lard. Some of the chickens they shot & some they run down; they shot the hogs.
8 They took it by hand the camp was close by my house.
9 They carried it to their camps; they had lots of wagons there.
10 They took it to eat, bless you! I saw them eating it right there in my house. They were nearly starved.
11 I told one of the officers that we would starve & they said no that we would get it all back again, come & go along with us; but I wouldn't go because the old man had my youngest child hid away in Tatnal Co: he took her away because she knew where the gold was hid & he didn't want her to tell. My boy was sent out to the swamp to watch the wagons of provisions & the soldiers took the wagons & the boy, & I never saw him anymore. He was 14 yrs. old. I could have got the child back but I was afraid my master would kill him; he said that he would & I knew that he would or else make his children do it: he made his sons kill 2 men big tall men like you. The Lord forgive them for the way they have treated me. The child could not help them from taking the horses. He said that Henry (my boy) hallooed for the sake of having the Yankees find him; but the Yankees asked him where he was going & he didn't know they were soldiers & he told them that he was going to Master's mules.
12 I didn't ask for any receipt.
13 It was taken in the day time, not secretly.
14 When they took this property, the army was encamped. Some got there before the camps were up. Some was hung up in the house. Some people told us that if we let some hang up they wouldn't touch the rest, but they did, they were close by. They commenced

taking when they first came. They staid there two nights. I heard a heap of shooting, but I don't think that they killed anybody. I didn't know any of the officers or quartermasters.
15 This horse was as fine a creature as ever was & the pork &c were in good order.
16 Item No. 1. I don't know how old the mare was. I know she was young. She was medium sized. She was in nice order, we kept a good creature. My husband bought it when it was a colt, about 2 years old. I think he had been using it a year & a little better. Colored people when they would work always had something for themselves, after working for their masters. I most forgot whether he paid cash or swapped cows. He worked & earned money, after he had done his masters work. They bridled & carried her off; I think they jumped right on her back
Item No. 2. We had 7 hogs & we killed them right there. It was pickled away in the barrel: Some was done hung up to smoke, but we took it down & put it into the barrels to keep them from getting it. He raised the hogs. He bought a sow and raised his own pork & that is the way he got this. He did his tasks & after that he worked for himself & he got some money & bought the hogs and then they increased. He worked Sundays too; and that was for ourselves. He always was a hardworking man. I could not tell how much these would weigh; they were monstrous hogs, they were a big breed of hogs. We had them up feeding. The others were some two years old, & some more. It took two men to help hang them up. This was the meat from 7 hogs.
Item No. 3. I had half a barrel of lard. It was in gourds, that would hold half a bushel a piece. We had this hid in the crib. This was lard from the hogs.
Item No. 4 I could not tell exactly how much corn there was but there was a right smart. We had 4 or 5 bushels ground up into meal & they took all the corn besides. They carried it off in bags and my children's undershirts, tied them like bags & filled them up. My husband made baskets and they toted some off in that way. They toted some off in fanners & big blue tubs.
Item No. 5. I don't know exactly how much rice there was; but we made a good deal. They toted it off in bundles, threshed out– It was taken in the sheaf They fed their horses on it. I saw the horses eating it as I passed there. They took my tubs, kettles &c. I didn't get anything back but an oven.
Item No. 7. We had 11 hogs. They were 2 or 3 years old. They were in pretty good order. We were intending to fatten them right next year– they killed them right there.
Item No. 8. I had 30 or 40 head of chickens. They took the last one. They shot them. This property all belonged to me and my husband. None of it belonged to Mr. Baggs I swore to the men so, but they wouldn't believe I could have such things. My girl had a changable silk dress & all had [talanas?] & they took them all– It didn't look like a Yankee person would be so mean. But they said if they didn't take them the whites here would & they did take some of my things from their camps after they left" (150-154). The questions corresponding with the enumerated responses have not been preserved.
[26] Guyora Binder, "The Slavery of Emancipation," *Cardozo Law Review* Vol. 17:2063 (1995)
[27] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2007).
[28] The full quote from the Proclamation is: "and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom" (Lincoln, 8).

[29] I say "apparently" because this is the argument James Oakes and other political historians of emancipation make about Lincoln's or the Republicans' foresight in their antislavery policy. See Oakes, *Freedom National*, particularly 416-476. Oakes says, ""Lincoln and the Republicans expected that slaves would run for their freedom if given the chance, and they constructed their antislavery policies on that expectation. They realized that they could not destroy slavery if they did not win the war, and they eventually concluded that they could not win the war unless they reversed decades of federal policy and enlisted tens of thousands of African Americans in the Union army" (22).
[30] Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863; Presidential Proclamations, 1791-1991; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives.
[31] The irony of this is that Lincoln eventually mandates federal policy of emancipation for all the enslaved who are *not* under Union jurisdiction and allows for the continued existence of slavery in those places under Union jurisdiction.
[32] See Mary Frances Berry, *Black Resistance, White Law* (New York: Penguin Press, 1994), particularly 1-52. Concerning the governmental policy to protect slavery, Berry says: "As seen from the Congressional debates […] any discussion of opposition to slavery in Congress would create incendiary conditions. Further, slavery was a local practice which the national government had no authority or right to regulate. And yet, if the southern states requested aid for slave insurrections or the return of fugitive slaves, the military force of the nation was constitutionally obliged to comply" (12).
[33] Franklin, *Emancipation Proclamation* (New York: DoubleDay, 1963), 15-16.
[34] Section I of the Confiscation Act reads: "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That if, during the present or any future insurrection against the Government of the United States, after the President of the United States shall have declared, by proclamation, that the laws of the United States are opposed, and the execution thereof obstructed, by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, or by the power vested in the marshals by law, any person or persons, his, her, or their agent, attorney, or employé, shall purchase or acquire, sell or give, any property of whatsoever kind or description, with intent to use or employ the same, or suffer the same to be used or employed, in aiding, abetting, or promoting such insurrection or resistance to the laws, or any person or persons engaged therein; or if any person or persons, being the owner or owners of any such property, shall knowingly use or employ, or consent to the use or employment of the same as aforesaid, all such property is hereby declared to be lawful subject of prize and capture wherever found; and it shall be the duty of the President of the United States to cause the same to be seized, confiscated, and condemned."
Section Four, addressing slaves, reads: "And be it further enacted, That whenever hereafter, during the present insurrection against the Government of the United States, any person claimed to be held to labor or service under the law of any State, shall be required or permitted by the person to whom such labor or service is claimed to be due, or by the lawful agent of such person, to take up arms against the United States, or shall be required or permitted by the person to whom such labor or service is claimed to be due, or his lawful agent, to work or to be employed in or upon any fort, navy yard, dock, armory, ship, entrenchment, or in any military or naval service whatsoever, against the Government and lawful authority of the United States, then, and in every such case, the person to whom such labor or service is claimed to be due shall forfeit his claim to such labor, any law of the State

or of the United States to the contrary notwithstanding. And whenever thereafter the person claiming such labor or service shall seek to enforce his claim, it shall be a full and sufficient answer to such claim that the person whose service or labor is claimed had been employed in hostile service against the Government of the United States, contrary to the provisions of this act."
U.S., Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, vol. 12 (Boston: Little Brown, 1863), p. 319.
[35] See Louis Gerteis' *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy Toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* and Silvana Siddal's *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862*.
[36] Harold Holzer, *Emancipating Lincoln* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012), 19.
[37] For an explanation of "political message," see Michael Silverstein, "Some Shtick from 'Tricky Dick' and the Circulation of U.S. Presidential Image" in *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 21 (1), June 2011, 54-77, particularly 70-71.
[38] John Syrett, *Civil War Confiscation Acts: Failing to Reconstruct the South* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 192-195.
[39] Franklin, 21.
[40] See Holzer, 35-36. Upon leaving the cabinet meeting on July 22nd agreeing to wait for a Union victory before issuing his Proclamation, Holzer explains that Lincoln used the time to develop a new strategy toward emancipation. First, he sought to verify the constitutionality of the Proclamation and close all legal loopholes that could render his policy void. Within this, Lincoln even considered including the more progressive aspiration of black enlistment. Second, Lincoln considered how to prepare the nation for what emancipation would bring, most notably a shift in war aims two years into combat, and the upheaval of race relations across the nation. Third, Lincoln focused on managing the public's apprehensive anticipation emancipation by calculating hints and using leaks of the Proclamation to his advantage, while he waited for a Union victory.
[41] For a discussion of 'value', see Michael Silverstein, "Discourse and the no-thing-ness of culture," *Signs and Society* 1, no.2, Fall 2013, 25-33
[42] I am understanding the event of emancipation as extending from 1861 to 1865, beginning with General Butler's harboring and utilizing runaway blacks as confiscated Confederate property and ending with news of emancipation finally reaching the outskirts of Texas after the war ended in 1865.
[43] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 60-61.
[44] Franklin, 82.
[45] See Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 23; and Hahn, 41.
[46] Anne Freadman, "Uptake," *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2002), 40. Freadman's use of "generic status" here evokes Carolyn Miller's understanding of genre inhering within the dynamics of social action, or "what it gets people to do with one another, and what they do with it." Qualifying the social dynamics wherein genre operates is paramount to understanding the authority the Emancipation Proclamation carried as an executive order and the significance of the unofficial and unauthorized articulations of freedom by the yet enslaved revising the provisions of emancipation.
[47] *ibid.* 48.

[48] Litwack, xi-xiv.
[49] Hahn, 87.
[50] See Litwack, 22 on errand running, and 181 on the "demoralizing effects" visits to town had upon blacks; also Hahn, 42 for mobility of slave labor and 68 for Confederate impressment of black labor.
[51] Litwack, 21-22.
[52] Hahn, 67.
[53] *ibid.*, 41.
[54] LItwack, 115.
[55] *ibid.* 21.
[56] *ibid*. 111-113. Also, one of the more popular Civil War songs "Kingdom Coming" or "The Year of Jubilo" represents how the tables turned for white slaveholders.
[57] Franklin, 143.
[58] *ibid*., 82.
[59] *ibid*. 129.
[60] Litwack, 227.
[61] *ibid.*, 181, 188.
[62] Franklin, 30.
[63] Litwack, 132.
[64] *ibid*. 223.
[65] James Weldon Johnson, *The Selected Writings of James Weldon Johnson: Volume II Social, Political, And Literary Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press), 97.
[66] See Amrita Chakrabarti Myer's *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Myers considers this reality, arguing that if legal manumission meant freedom, then freedom was not enough for any kind of successful livelihood. Freedom required improving one's social standing, acquiring financial resources, consolidating familial security, and the performing respectability (3, 14). Even as Myers presents several case histories of women who worked to see their visions of freedom become reality, securing the rights of freedom by setting in motion what Myers calls an "earned citizenship," free black households yet reflected the thin line between enslavement and freedom in the slave South.
[67] Franklin, 50.
[68] The phrase "the rhythm and flow of life" is from Christina Sharpe's *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 102. Here, Sharpe reads a scene in Bessie Head's *Maru* where Margaret, the protagonist whose embrace of her identity as Masarwa functions to disrupt racial assumptions in the novel, finds herself at a point going "almost unnoticed." Margaret's very presence in Dilepe, a village where the enslaved are Masarwa, is characterized by disruption. However, her position in the village is "almost forgotten" and her disruption is incorporated into the rhythm and flow of life in Dilepe, where the village power structures remain intact.
[69] Holzer, 3.
[70] In the final two sentences of the "Gettysburg Address," Lincoln says, "It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great tase remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these

dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth" (*The Gettysburg Address*, 331-332).

[71] See Ira Berlin, et.al., *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War*; more recently, Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Lincoln and American Slavery*; and for acerbic criticism of Lincoln as great emancipator, Lerone Bennett, *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream*.

[72] Stevens warned that anything less than outright emancipation without compensation, colonization, or apologies for it as a military necessity would cause more harm than good. He says, "Patch up a compromise now […] leaving this germ of evil and it will soon again overrun the whole South, even if you free three fourths of the slaves. Your peace would be a curse. You would have expended countless treasures and untold lives in vain" (Franklin, 141).

[73] Holzer, 38; emphasis mine.

[74] *ibid.* 44.

[75] Sharpe, 23.

[76] Sharpe's usage of intimacies references her definition of monstrous intimacies, which she explains as "a set of known and unknown performances and inhabited horrors, desires and positions produced, reproduced, circulated, and transmitted, that are breathed in like air and often unacknowledged to be monstrous" (3).

[77] Problematizoing redemption, Sharpe says, " As a political strategy, redemption, with its double emphasis on 'deliverance from sin *and its consequences*' […] replaces a real reckoning with history (state brutality, colonialism, slavery, apartheid, ethnocentrism, truth and reconciliation) and its consequences with a symbolic sacrifice; it means that some atrocities remain unspoken and unspeakable" (73).

[78] Charles Richard Williams, *The Life of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, Nineteenth President of the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), 7-8.

[79] During a Southern tour, Hayes renders an enthusiastic speech in Atlanta in hopes of reconciling relations between North and South. He addresses the issue of slavery and the principles by which each side fought but the question of what is 'right' never interferes with reconciliation. He says, "Without any fault of yours or any fault of mine, or of any one of this great audience slavery existed in this country. It was in the Constitution of the country. The colored man was here, not by his own voluntary action. It was the misfortune of his fathers that he was here. […] He was here, however, and we of the two sections differed about what should be done with him. […] You here mainly joined the Confederate side, and fought bravely, risked your lives heroically in behalf of your convictions; and can I, can any true man anywhere, fail to respect the man who risks his life for his convictions? And as I accord that respect to you, and I believe you to be equally liberal and generous and just, I fell that , as I stand before you as one who fought in the Union army for his convictions, I am entitled to your respect. Now that conflict is over, my friends." *ibid.,* 251.

[80] Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, *National Party Platforms, 1840-1964* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 82.

[81] United States. President Ulysses S. Grant, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* Vol 7 (Washington: Government Print off 189699), 221

[82] The seeds of postwar compromise were sown well before Reconstruction, with Lincoln's address at Gettysburg. When Lincoln called for a new birth of freedom, he alluded to a freedom based on compromise and not on revolution.
For the relationship between Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and the political tradition of compromise, see Robert Pierce Forbes, "'We Here Highly Resolve': The End of Compromise and the Return to Revolutionary Time," *The Gettysburg Address: Perspectives on Lincoln's Greatest Speeches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 24-50.
[83] Rayford Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954), 10.
[84] See C. Van Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Woodward makes this argument, saying the men of 1877 "were of smaller stature than the great Federalists, to be sure, and their work was less celebrated and certainly less known. But if the Men of 1787 made the *Thermidor* of the First American Revolution, the Men of 1877 fulfilled a corresponding part in the Second American Revolution. They were the men who come at the end of periods of revolutionary upheaval, when the great hopes and soaring ideals have lagged and failed, and the fervors have burned themselves out. They come to say that disorder has gone too far and the extremists must be got in hand, that order and peace must be established at any price. And in their deliberations they generally have been more concerned with preserving the pragmatic and practical gains and ends of revolutions than the more idealistic aims. In this respect the Men of 1877 were not unlike those who had been cast in the same historical role before them" (233-234).
[85] See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996). Arendt says, "the absence of the social question from the American scene was, after all, quite deceptive, and that abject and degrading misery was present everywhere in the form of slavery and Negro labour. […] As it is, we are tempted to ask ourselves if the goodness of the poor white man's country did not depend to a considerable degree upon black labour and black misery—there lived roughly 40,000 Negroes along with approximately 1,850,000 white men in America in the middle of the eighteenth century, and even in the absence of reliable statistical data we may be sure that the percentage of complete destitution and misery was considerably lower in the countries of the Old World. From this, we can only conclude that the institution of slavery carries an obscurity even blacker than the obscurity of poverty; the slave, not the poor man, was 'wholly overlooked'" (70, 71).
[86] The first great compromise, the Constitution, experienced a good deal of difficulty getting ratified as several states resisted the preliminary provisions of the proposed new form of government. For more on the Constitution see: Donald Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970); Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010). In 1820, the issue of slavery, which had long been a sore point in factional relations since the Congressional Conventions, threatened to disrupt the balance of political power in Congress with the admission of Missouri into the Union. Compromise momentarily suppressed tensions in its effort to maintain political balance in Congress as well as manage what would be the dominant ideological identity of the nation as America expanded westward. With the Nullification Crisis of 1833, South Carolina threaten to secede from the Union, declaring the Tariffs of 1828 and 1832 null and void. The issue was a matter of state rights versus centralized power. While the Compromise Tariff of 1833 averted a federal

military response, the balance of power between domain of the state and the nation presented an issue a unified system of government. Continued westward expansion again placed slavery at the heart of renewed threats of violence and disunion. The Compromise of 1850 was a complex and multifaceted bargain that attempted to placate the anxieties of both slaveholding and free states. With the Compromise of 1850, it became clear that national unity was a patchwork of negotiations that did not resolve sectional tensions but premised unity on the persistent deferral of conflict. The fifth—and the one failed—compromise was that of 1861. The tumultuous 1850s (the repeal of the Missouri Compromise with the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, "Bloody Kansas," the *Dred Scott* Supreme Court decision in 1857, and John Brown's Harper's Ferry raid in 1859) had disillusioned Northern public opinion's faith in compromise to legislate this issue of slavery and aggravated Southern fears of slavery's extinction. After Lincoln's election and South Carolina's vote for secession, there could be no compromise that would not have placed the continued unification of the country at the behest of Southern threats. Compromise was ultimately rejected because another attempt to defer conflict would have come at the price of sacrificing the principles of republicanism. Negotiating political tensions became more about upholding principles rather than brokering bargains, and compromise was not effective in ensuring national unification.

[87] Keith Ian Polakoff, *The Politics of Inertia: The Election of 1876 and the End of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 250.

[88] Cox writes: ""The lapse of time has so far consolidated and established the political rights of the Negroes that their separate organization as a party is no longer essential to their safety. On the contrary, it is now the cause of their greatest danger. The whites of the South will recognize the political equality of the blacks if this does not threaten to continue the rule of a class distinguished by *race*; but if the 'color line' is continued, nothing can prevent all the remaining Southern states from following the example of Mississippi, and the political rights of the blacks will exist only in name, and for the purpose of conferring upon the real governing class the additional representation in Congress. […] Upon the basis of a hearty and earnest avowal on the part of Southern white men that they will in honorable good faith accept & defend the present Constitutional rights of the freedman, we ought not to have great difficulty in finding means to rally to the support of a Republican administration a strong body of the best men representing the capital, the intelligence, the virtue & revived patriotism of the old population of the South, willing to cooperate in the good work of bringing in an era of real peace, prosperity & good brotherhood." *ibid.,* 294.

[89] See Ellison, *Invisible Man* "Prologue" on the use of "un-visible" and Danielle Allen on political invisibility from her essay, "Invisible Citizens: Political Exclusion and Domination in Arendt and Ellison" in *Nomos* XLVI (2005).

[90] In "Blackness and Nothingness," Fred Moten reads Orlando Patterson's formation of the slave as a "socially dead person" and slavery as a "secular excommunication" as "more precisely understood as the radical exclusion from a political order, which is tantamount, in Arendt's formation, with something on the order of a radical relegation *to* the social. The problem with slavery, for Patterson, is that it is political death, not social death…" (Moten, 740).

[91] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Race Making in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

[92] See, for example, Kevin Gaines *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century;* Evelyn Brooks Higgenbothem, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Church, 1880-1920.*
[93] John W. Blassingame, et.al, eds, *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews* Vol. 4: 1864-1880 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 414-422.
[94] *ibid*, 414.
[95] *ibid*, 416.
[96] *ibid*, 417.
[97] "Another Chapter of Blood at Vicksburg," *The Christian Recorder* Vol XIII, No. 29. Thursday, July 22, 1875.
[98] *ibid*.
[99] *ibid.*
[100] See Arendt, *On Revolution*, 21-58. Even in the cases where revolution initiated a new order or system of government, the gesture toward return/restoration was critical for the stability of the post-revolution nation. For example, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 fundamentally changed the state of Western politics in that the rights of man supplanted the divine rule of the monarch in English governance. Nevertheless, even as the tyrannical James II was overthrown, the monarchy was restored with William and Mary. Although bloodless in its coup, the Glorious Revolution was the dawn of a new, "enlightened" politics oriented about man rather than God; nevertheless, it also turned back to reinstate the symbol of English sovereignty.
[101] George Washington, "Letter to James Madison, Mount Vernon, November 5, 1786," *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, 1745-1799* (Washington: Government Print Off [1931-44]). Washington says, "How melancholy is the reflection, that in so short a space, we should have made such large strides toward fulfilling the prediction of our transatlantic foe! 'leave them to themselves, and their government will soon dissolve'. Or will their supineness suffer ignorance, and the arts of self-interested designing disaffected and desperate characters, to involve this rising empire in wretchedness and contempt? What stronger evidence can be given of the want of energy in our governments than these disorders? If there exists not a power to check them, what security has a man for life, liberty or property" (50-51)?
[102] These five occasions refer to the tensions and ominous threats preceding the five political compromises prior to the Civil War: the Constitution in 1787, the Compromise of 1820, the Compromise of 1833, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.
[103] Woodward, 1.
[104] Polakoff, 320. Also, suffrage was not only considered the panacea by many blacks but also by Radical Republicans. The wheel within a wheel. Black southerners didn't get that from nowhere.
[105] George Julian, *Political Recollections: 1840-1872* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg & Co, 1884), 265.
[106] George Julian, *Later Speeches on Political Questions, with select controversial papers* (Indianapolis: Carlon & Hollenbeck, 1889), 174. This quote concludes a speech Julian made on January 8, 1876 decrying the corruption of the Republican party in Louisiana and opposing the method of counting the electoral votes between Hayes and Tilden. For more

on Julian's vindication of the Liberal Republicans and Democrats, see his *Political Recollections: 1840-1872*, 337-352.
[107] Hayes, 248.
[108] Quoted in David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 125.
[109] Charles Sumner, "Interest and Duty of Colored Citizens in the Presidential Election," in *The Works of Charles Sumner* Volume 15 (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1870-1883), 173-195.
[110] Blassingame, 417.
[111] *ibid*., 419.
[112] *ibid*., 420.
Douglass' revision of the Declaration of Independence to the benevolent societies reads, "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a people to dissolve the bands which have. connected them with another, and to assume among their fellow men the independent and equal position to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain [un]alienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights various organizations are instituted among men, deriving their power from the consent of those in whose interests they have been professedly created; that whenever any such organization becomes destructive of these ends it is the right and the duty of such people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new organizations, laying their foundations in such principles as to them shall seem most likely to promote their safety and welfare" (419-420).
[113] Saidiya Hartman encourages us to think critically about this general applicability of a freedom influenced by individual rights discourse, bourgeois constructions of the market, and equality premised on sameness when she says, "the universality or unencumbered individuality of liberalism relies on tacit exclusions and norms that preclude substantive equality; all do not equally partake of the resplendent, plenipotent, indivisible, and steely singularity that it proffers" (Hartman, 122).
[114] I am working with the framework Erica Edwards puts forward in *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). She says, "Charisma is a political fiction or ideal, a set of assumptions about authority and identity that works to structure how political mobilization is conceived and enacted" (3).
[115] It may seem odd to leave out "The Atlanta Exposition Address," Washington's famous 1895 speech that would come to embody his social, political, and economic plan for black Southerners and for the South at large. However, what I want to do here is show how Washington creates a particular narrative about race relations in the South that would contextualize the speech and retroactively rationalize the necessity of the position he takes to accommodate racial segregation.
[116] Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* in *Three Negro Classics*, ed. John Hope Franklin (New York: Avon Books, 1999). 71-2.
[117] Washington says: "Naturally, most of our people who received some little education became teachers or preachers…. Many became teachers who could do little more than write their names." And later: "The ministry was the profession that suffered most—and

still suffers, though there has been great improvement—on account of not only ignorant but in many cases immoral men who claimed that they were 'called to preach'" (72).
[118] See Louis Harlan, "Booker T. Washington and the Politics of Accommodation," *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis Harlan* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1988). According to Harlan, it is no historical secret that "in his eagerness to establish common ground with whites, that is, with some whites, Washington often overstepped his purpose in public speeches by telling chicken-thief, mule, and other dialect stories intended to appeal to white stereotypes of blacks, and he occasionally spoke of the Afro-American as a 'child race'" (148). Also see Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).
[119] See Louis Harlan, "Up From Slavery as History and Biography" in Brundage, *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida,2003).
[120] Washington, 73.
[121] For a discussion of monogenist scientific racism, particularly as it relates to racial slavery in the American South, see Harriet Washington's *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 25-51.
[122] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York:Penguin Books, 1989), 9.
[123] Washington, 37.
[124] *ibid.*, 38.
[125] *ibid*., 40.
[126] Washington is challenging the possibility of any kind of "natural" relation between black Americans and government. This does not mean there is not a history of black Americans petitioning for civil rights and equal protection under the law. See Edlie Wong's *Neither Fugitive Nor Free*, especially 127-182; and Nell Irvin Painter's *Creating Black Americans*, 63-81.
[127] Washington, 73.
[128] Ironically, this comes by way of a statement in which Washington does not criticize slavery but attempts to redeem it for the benefits it afforded black Americans. In short, he says, "…we must acknowledge that, notwithstanding the cruelty and moral wrong of slavery, the ten million Negroes inhabiting this country…are in a stronger and more hopeful condition…" (Washington, 37).
[129] *ibid*., 73.
[130] It should not be lost that Washington was well aware of the resurgence of federalism from the late 1870s through the 1890s. Disillusionment with Reconstruction policy was widespread among liberal reformers—the leading intellectuals and industrial elite responsible for the reconstruction of America liberal political ideology between the end the Civil War and the Progressive Era, a group to which almost all of Washington's Northern benefactors belonged. Nancy Cohen's *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism 1865-1914* offers an insightful study of who were the liberal reformers and just how much they determined the shifting tides of political culture during the period. Liberal reformers were determined to abandon the "bankrupt optimism of Radical Reconstruction" but their efforts were challenged by the federal government's commitment to protecting the local governments created by enfranchised black men. However, beginning with the *Slaughterhouse* decision in 1873 and culminating with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, the Supreme Court contributed mightily to the erosion of national authority in the

former slave states. The Court's narrow constructions of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, and their declaration the unconstitutionality of the Enforcement/Civil Rights Acts has to be read as judicial retaliation against Congressional Republican rule. Washington understood well the unpopularity and inviability of the federal government as he rose to prominence in a South adamant about home rule, appointed by benefactors who championed the economic man and his *laissez fare* political ideology. See Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 61-85.

[131] My use of legibility is informed by James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 53-83.

[132] Washington, 29.

[133] The brevity of Washington's response is read in sharp contrast with Frederick Douglass' more philosophical treatment of slavery's disruptive disorientations. This is how Douglass explains the uncertainty of his birth: "In regard to the *time* of my birth, I cannot be as definite as I have been respecting the *place*. Nor, indeed, can I impart much knowledge concerning my parents. Genealogical trees do not flourish among slaves. A person of some consequence here in the north, sometimes designated *father*, is literally abolished in slave law and slave practice. I never met with a slave who could tell me how old he was. Few slave-mothers know anything of the months of the year, nor of the days of the month. They keep no family records, with marriages, births, and deaths. They measure the ages of their children by spring time, winter time, harvest time, planting time, and the like; but these soon become undistinguishable and forgotten. Like other slaves, I cannot tell how old I am. This destitution was among my earliest troubles. I learned when I grew up, that my master—and this in the case with masters generally—allowed no questions to be put to him, by which a slave might learn his age. Such questions are deemed evidence of impatience, and even of impudent curiosity" (Douglass, *My Bondage My Freedom*, 30).

[134] Washington, 29.

[135] For Washington's description of the cabin, 30; his description of the labor that occupied his time in place of any chance for sport, 31; on no schooling, 32; his family not eating together, 33; and the trials of clothing, 34.

[136] On several occasions, Harlan provides evidence of Washington's autobiographical writings containing elements of myth and fiction to "enliven the narrative" of his upbringing. Washington's descriptions of slavery appealed to the imagined memory of slavery his white benefactors held thirty-five years after its abolition. Harlan writes of Washington's opening: "At the very outset of his narrative in *Up From Slavery*, Washington felt it necessary to incorporate the plantation legend that had become fashionable in the late nineteenth century, which endowed every southerner with an imaginary antebellum plantation, conveniently burned, of course, by General Sherman. Instead of describing his birthplace accurately as a small farm where his owner and the owner's sons worked alongside about a half-dozen male slaves in the field, Washington calls it a plantation, complete with a Big House, overseer, and slave quarters. Being the slave of a small-scale slaveowner was still slavery, of course, but it was very different from the gang labor and the impersonality of a big plantation. When Washington returned for the first time to his birthplace in 1908, he remarked: 'I'm afraid I wouldn't know the place. Every thing is changed. But after all, the most remarkable changes that I notice is in the size of things.'"

See Harlan, "*Up From Slavery* as History and Biography," *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, 30-31; Harlan, *Booker T Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 3-27.

[137] Washington, 32.

[138] Douglass describes the blood-stained gate as awakening experience in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*: "I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt o mine, whom he [Plummer the overseer] used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. […] I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I shall never forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle" (*The Classic Slave Narratives,* 343).

Less sensationalized but no less significant are the other means by which one could become aware of his or her enslaved status. Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* is a major slave narrative that de-centers the masculinist physical struggle for freedom, tells of how death introduced her to life in slavery. She says, "When I was six years old, my mother died; and then, for the first time, I learned, by the talk around me, that I was a slave." After six kind years with her mother's mistress, Jacobs describes, "there came that blight, which too surely waits on every human being born to be a chattel"—she was unable to escape the auction block and was bequeathed to her mistress' relative (Jacobs, 7,8).

[139] Douglass, *My Bondage My Freedom*, 178.

[140] Washington, 30, 31.

[141] Washington says, "The hurtful influences of the institution were not by any means confined to the Negro. This was fully illustrated by the life upon our own plantation. The whole machinery of slavery was so constructed as to cause labour, as a rule, to be looked upon as a badge of degradation, of inferiority. Hence labour was something that both races on the slave plantation sought to escape. The slave system on our place, in a large measure, took the spirit of self-reliance and self-help out of the white people. My old master hd many boys and girls, but not one, so far as I knew, her mastered a single trade or special line of productive industry. The girls were not taught to cook, sew or to take care of the house. [...] As a rule, there was food for whites ad blacks, but inside the house, and on the dining-room table, there was wanting that delicacy and refinement of tough and finish which can make a home the most convenient, comfortable, and attractive place in the world" (37-38).

[142] It is also interesting to contrast Washington's argument here with, which is oriented around victimhood, with Jacobs' and Douglass' famous passages describing how the morality of the free person cannot be applied to the life of the enslaved person. Discussing her copulation with Mr. Sands to foil the ever-encroaching Dr. Flint's schemes, Jacobs writes: "It seems less degrading to give one's self, than to submit to compulsion. There is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except that which he gains by kindness and attachment. […] There may be sophistry in all this; but the condition of a slave confuses all principles of morality, and, in fact, renders the practice of them impossible. […] Pity me, and pardon me, O virtuous reader! You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to

the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another. You never exhausted your ingenuity in avoiding the snares, and eluding the power of a hated tyrant; you never shuddered at the sound of his footsteps, and tumbled within hearing of his voice. I know I did wrong. No one can feel it more sensibly than I do. The painful and humiliating memory will haunt me to my dying day. Still, in looking back, calmly on the events of my life, I feel that the salve woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others" (70-71). Douglass philosophizes about morality more generally: "It was necessary the right to steal from *others* should be established; and this could only rest upon a wider range of generalization than that which supposed the right to steal from my master. […] 'I am', thought I, 'not only the slave of Master Thomas, but I am the slave of society at large. Society at large has bound itself in form and in fact, to assist Master Thomas in robbing me of my rightful liberty, and of the just reward of my labor; therefore, whatever rights I have against Master Thomas, I have, equally, against those confederated with him in robbing me of liberty. As society has marked me out as a privileged plunder, on the principle of self-preservation I am justified in plundering in turn. Since each slave belongs to all; all must, therefore, belong to each'. I shall here make a profession of faith which may shock some, offend others, and be dissented from by all. It is this: Within the bound of his just earnings, I hold that the slave is fully justified in helping himself to the *gold and silver, and the best apparel of his maters, or that of any other slaveholder; and that such taking is not stealing in any just sense of that word.* The morality of *free* society can have no application to *slave* society" (154).

[143] Speaking of Washington, DuBois says: "Honest and earnest criticism from those whose interest are most nearly touched,—criticism of writers by readers, of government by those governed, of leaders by those led,—this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society. If the best of the American Negroes receive by outer pressure a leader whom they had not recognized before, manifestly there is here a certain palpable gain. Yet there is also irreparable loss,—a loss of that peculiarly valuable education which a group receives when by search and criticism it finds and commissions its own leaders" (*Souls*, 40).

[144] Smock, *Booker T. Washington: Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009), 104-105.

[145] This idea of familiarity lending to cooperation is at the heart of Washington's appeal in his famous Atlanta Exposition Address. To the white members of the audience, he says: "To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, 'Cast down your bucket where you are'. Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labour wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South. […] While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sickbed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if

need be in defence of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one" (147-148).
[146] Harlan, "Booker T. Washington and the Politics of Accommodation," 6, 8.
[147] Coclanis, "What Made Booker Wash(ington)?" in Brundage, ed., *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, 83.
[148] Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society: From Victorian virtues to Modern Values* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995), 11-12.
[149] Washington, 37.
[150] See Wilson J. Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). My use of "pragmatic" follows Wilson J. Moses' explanation of Washington and pragmatism: "Booker T. Washington's approach to reform is often described as 'pragmatic,' a term that is as confusing as 'progressive'. The concepts pragmatism and progressivism frequently overlap and there are few figures in American intellectual history who meet the definition of progressive better than William James and John Dewey, founders of the concept of pragmatism. In colloquial speech, pragmatism usually refers to the American penchant for informality and practicality. Pragmatism may be used in a pejorative sense, as a 'dignified alternative to unprincipled or timeserving'. Some scholars will allow that Washington was 'a pragmatist in the colloquial sense', in recognition of his 'accommodations' to southern 'realities'. If there are cognates between Washington's thinking and that of John Dewey or William James, these are dismissed as casual or unsophisticated. Parallels between Washington's missionary ideals and the social gospel of James seem to have impressed few, if any, biographers.
Washington was not a follower of James, nor would his importance be enhanced if he had been. Whether or not any such ideological influence existed, Washington had nothing to gain by claiming it. The appearance of pragmatism in Washington was spontaneous and should not seem incongruous, if pragmatism is, as one scholars seem to think, a peculiar product of the American environment" (155).
[151] Of Malden, Washington says: At that time salt-mining was the great industry in that part of West Virginia, and the little town of Malden was right in the midst of the salt-furnaces. My stepfather had already secured a job at a salt-furnace, and he had also secured a little cabin for us to live in. Our new house was no better than the one we had left on the old plantation in Virginia. In fact, in one respect it was worse. Notwithstanding the poor condition of our plantation cabin, we were at all times sure of pure air. Our new home was in the midst of a cluster of cabins crowded closely together, and as there were no sanitary regulations, the fifth about the cabins was often intolerable. Some of our neighbours were coloured people, and some were the poorest and most ignorant and degraded white people. It was a motley mixture. Drinking, gambling, quarrels, fights, and shockingly immoral practices were frequent. All who lived in the little town were in one way or another connected with the salt business. Though I was a mere child, my stepfather put me and my brother at work in one of the furnaces. Often I began work as early as four o'clock in the morning" (42-3).
[152] Washington, 41.
[153] Benston writes, "Naming is inevitably genealogical revisionism." Accordingly, the authentication which comes by way of self-designation entails both an unnaming of the immediate past and a naming or, "staging of self in relation to a specific context of

revolutionary affirmation." See Benston, "'I Yam What I Yam': Naming and Unnaming in Afro-American Literature" in Gates, ed., *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 151-174.

[154] In *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartmans says: "the moving about of the freed exposed the chasm between the grand narrative of emancipation and the circumscribed arena of possibility. As a practice, moving about accumulated nothing and did not effect ay reversals of power but indefatigably held onto the unrealizable—being free—by temporarily eluding the restraints of order. Like stealing way, it was more symbolically redolent than materially transformative. […] In effect, by refusing to stay in their place, the emancipated insisted that freed was a departure, literally and figuratively, from their former condition" (127-128).

[155] Later in the chapter, Washington severely criticizes his childhood classmates who, mostly likely teased him because he wore a cap his mother made him rather than owning a store-bought cap. He dismisses the other students' emphasis on "store hats" as frivolous materialism. As these schoolmates were preoccupied with something that satisfied no need, Washington claims they fell victim to distraction, which cost them their lives. He says: "I found that all of the other children wore hats or caps on their heads, and I had neither hat nor cap. In fact, I do not remember that up to the time of going to school I had ever worn any kind of covering upon my head, nor do I recall that either I or anybody else had even thought anything about the need of covering for my head. But, of course, when I saw how all the other boys were dressed, I began to feel quite uncomfortable. […] I have always felt proud, whenever I think of the incident, that my mother had strength of character enough not to be led into the temptation of seeming to be that which she was not—of trying to impress my schoolmates and others with the fact that she was able to buy me a 'store hat' when she was not. […] I have noted the fact, but without satisfaction, I need not add, that several of the boys who began their careers with 'store hats' and who were my schoolmates and used to join in the sport that was made of me because I had only a 'homespun' cap, have ended their careers in the penitentiary, while others are not able now to buy any kind of hat" (46-47).

[156] Harlan says, "Quite early one morning Booker learned one of the reasons his stepfather had sent for him to come to Malden. He was routed from bed and he and his brother John went to work helping Wash Ferguson pack the salt. […] The boys' work was to assist their stepfather in the heavy and unskilled labor of packing. Their workday often began as early as four o'clock in the morning and continued until dark, and the stepfather pocketed their pay" (*The Making of a Black Leader*, 32).

[157] Washington, 38.

[158] *ibid*, 45.

[159] *ibid*, 43.

[160] *ibid*, 43.

[161] *ibid,* 45.

[162] *ibid*, 49.

[163] For more on how Washington assimilated the language and logic of Social Darwinism, see Smock, *Booker T. Washington*: *Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow*, 107-133.

[164] Washington's desire for education was not unlike the townspeople's, or most other freed black Americans after emancipation. Freed blacks driving the post-emancipation education movement understood education as fundamental to the experience of freedom. See James

Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, *1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

[165] It is understood that in slave narratives, literacy—and particularly the act of learning how to read—is a point of becoming, where one recognizes their own humanity and subjectivity through the speaking book. The text offers possibilities for the reader to see and understand himself within a larger humanity, which, in many ways, provides a different understanding of how to read one's own life. This is evident, probably most famously, in Frederick Douglass' reading of *The Columbian Orator*. See Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), especially chapter four, "The Trope of the Talking Book."

[166] Washington, 43-49.

[167] Washington, 49.

[168] Of the emergence of the "economic man," Nancy Cohen goes on to say, "Liberal reformers, furthermore, equated 'economic man' with 'citizen', thereby subordinating political activity to a normative model of economic behavior. […] He demonstrates his rationality by calculating self-interest, all the time aware that natural economic laws determined and constrained his behavior. He certified his worth by the prosperity he achieved for himself and his family; his ruin lay in senseless political schemes that ignored the laws of the market" (47).

[169] See Robert Eng, *Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton Virginia, 1861-1890* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979).

[170] Washington, 48.

[171] Washington, 50.

[172] Washington says, "I have no idea, as I have stated elsewhere, who my grandmother was. I have, or have had, uncles and aunts and cousins, but I have no knowledge as to what most of them are. My case will illustrate that of hundreds of thousands of black people in every part of our country. […] The fact that the individual has behind and surrounding him proud family history and connection serves as a stimulus to help him to overcome obstacles when striving for success" (48).

[173] In *Uplifting the Race*, Kevin Gaines describes two different kinds of uplift, with the first collective version happening during the emancipation period and the other, more individualistic, prominent during the age of Washington. He says, "For many black cultural elites, uplift described an ideology of self-help articulated mainly in racial and middle-class specific, rather than in broader, egalitarian terms… This understanding of uplift, shaped by the imperatives of Jim Crow terror and New South economic development, departed from the liberation theology of the emancipation era: generally, amidst social changes wrought by industrialism, immigration, migration, and antilock repression, post-Reconstruction advocates of uplift transformed the race's collective historical struggles against the slave system and the planter class into a self-appointed personal duty to reform the character and manage the behavior of blacks themselves. In the antebellum period, uplift had often signified both the process of group struggle and its object, freedom. But with the advent of Jim Crow regimes, the self-help component of uplift increasingly bore the stamp of evolutionary racial theories positing the civilization of elites against the moral degradation of the masses. The shift to bourgeois evolutionism bot only obscured the social inequities resulting from racial and class subordination but also marked a retreat from earlier, unconditional claims black and white abolitions made for emancipation, citizenship, and

education based on Christian and Enlightenment ethics. It signaled the move from anti-slavery apples for inalienable human rights o more limited claims for black citizenship that required that the race demonstrate its preparedness to exercise those rights" (20-21). For more, see pages xi-46.

[174] Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought*, 159. For more on Washington's "practical Christianity," see the chapter "Booker T. Washington and the Meanings of Progress," 141-165.

[175] In addition to avoiding confrontation with his white readership, supporters, and potential supporters, Washington actually apologies for Southern sentiment toward black Americans later in his narrative during the speech he gives upon receiving an honorary degree from Harvard University. He says: "In the economy of God there is but one standard by which an individual can succeed—there is but one for a race. This country demands that every race shall measure itself by the American standard. By it a race must rise or fall, succeed or fail, and in the last analysis mere sentiment counts for little. During the next half-century and more, my race must continue passing through the severe American crucible. We are to be tested in our perseverance, our power to endure wrong, to withstand temptations, to economize, to acquire and use skill; in our ability to compete, to succeed in commerce, to disregard the superficial for the real, the appearance of the substance, to be great and yet small, learned and yet simple, high and yet servant of all" (192).

[176] This anti-black sentiment is not only characteristic of a recalcitrant postwar South. Northerners who grew disinterested in the "Negro question" and even the missionary societies committed to aiding freedmen during Reconstruction also harbored these sentiments. Eng, in *Freedom's First Generation*, writes of the American Missionary Society: "The AMA evolved a new negative vision of the freedmen and a method of operation that moved almost all missionaries from direct contact with the black masses. […] Rather than focusing on the failure of white Americans to provide the needed funds for black uplift and advancement, the missionaries began to emphasize the faults in the victims of society's perniciousness. The postwar direction of missionary understanding of the freedmen had been foreshadowed in Hampton long before the war's end. AMA workers there had began to lose sight of the blacks as individuals and had taken to referring to them as one undifferentiated mass. The things they said about them, too, had begun to change. It was no longer the positive attributes about blacks, but their weaknesses that were emphasized" (112).

[177] Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida. B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 64-65.

[178] This idea of the black masses as "plastic beings" comes from General Samuel C. Armstrong, founder of Hampton Institute, benefactor, mentor, and father figure to Washington, a man Washington professed as "Christlike" and "the perfect man." While making a case for an educational system of "tender violence" to rouse the black man, Armstrong says, "the deficiency of moral force and self-respect are the chief misfortunes of the race…The plastic character of the race puts them completely under the control of their leaders…A most unfortunate result of the blind leading the blind is already seen in the belief that political rights are better obtained by political warfare than by advancement in knowledge and in ability to care for themselves. How to withstand these dangers…is one of the problems most urgently pressing on Southern society" (quoted in Eng, *Freedom's First Generation*, 115).

[179] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 1.
[180] *ibid*, 1
[181] For concise discussions of legal speech act theory, see Paul Amselek, "Philosophy of Law and the Theory of Speech Acts," *Ratio Juris*. *Vol. 1, No. 3*, 1988 and Lorenzo Fiorito, "On Performatives in Legal Discourse," *Metalogicon*, XIX, 2, 2006.
[182] C. Van Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction*; Allan Peskin, "Was There a Compromise of 1877," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 60, no. 1, 63-75; Keith Ian Polakoff, *The Politics of Inertia: The Election of 1876 and the End of Reconstruction*.
[183] See Rayford Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* and Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America*.
[184] Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," *Limited Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).
[185] *ibid*, 2.
[186] *ibid*, 2-3
[187] *ibid*, 1, 13.
[188] *ibid,* 13.
[189] *ibid*, 13.
[190] Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* is not entirely clear on defining force. Subsequent speech act theorists have defined force, (with specific reference to illocutionary force) as the speaker's intention in producing the utterance. Another definition is the combination of the illocutionary point of an utterance and the particular presuppositions and attitudes accompanying that point). See Searle and Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[191] Derrida, "Signature," 13-14.
[192] See Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).
[193] For a discussion on how slavery allowed for the success of America's revolution and led to a peculiar understanding of freedom, see Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution*, particularly pages 59-114.
[194] These questions are but a fraction of the questions dominating national discourse concerning race that sought address by way of true or false values. For the question, "Is the Negro a man?" see Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" for a masterful exposé on why the question itself is irreverent and irrelevant.
[195] Derrida, 14.
[196] *ibid*, 14.
[197] *ibid*, 15.
[198] *ibid*, 15.
[199] *ibid*, 15.
[200] *Souls*, 13-14.
[201] Arendt, 49-63.
[202] Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 11.
[203] See Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," *Black, White, and in Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 203-229.

Spillers says the the body is disrupted by "externally imposed meaning and uses: 1) the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; 2) at the same time—in stunning contradiction—the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming *being for* the captor; 3) in this absence *from* a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of "otherness"; 4) as a category of "otherness," the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general "powerlessness," resonating through various centers of human and social meaning" (206).

[204] Spillers says: "W.E.B. DuBois predicted as early as 1903 that the twentieth century would be the century of the "color line." We could add to this spatiotemporal configuration another thematic of analogously terrible weight: if the "black woman" can be seen as a particular figuration of the slit subject that psychoanalytic theory posits, then this century marked the site of "its" profoundest revelation. The problem before us is deceptively simple: the terms enclosed in quotation marks in the preceding paragraph isolate overdetermined nominative properties. Embedded in bizarre axiological ground, they demonstrate a sort of telegraphic coding; they are markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean. In that regard, the names by which I am called in the public place render an example of signifying property *plus*. In order for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by a particular historical order, and there await whatever marvels of my own inventiveness" (203).

[205] *ibid*, 208.

[206] DuBois, 34.

[207] *ibid*, 33.

[208] *ibid*, 80.

[209] *ibid*, 11.

[210] *ibid*, 3-4.

[211] DuBois says at the end of "The Forethought," "And, finally, need I add that I who speak here am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the Veil" (2)?

[212] *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896); Washington, 221.

[213] Derrida, 14.

[214] See DuBois' recollection of his participation in the schoolhouse's visiting card exchange, where he first encountered the divisiveness of racial prejudice (*Souls*, 4-5).

[215] DuBois, 5.

[216] In his praise of black history and civilization, DuBois himself fails to acknowledge the rich history of communities and complex social networks, involving more than only single men, that were central to the prosperity of black civilizations. Nevertheless, if this is an appeal to the other world across the line, then perhaps DuBois' reference to the powers of single black men hoped to resonate with the culture that prizes representative men. See Hazel Carby's *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 9-44; Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[217] For an explanation of how the American world yields the black subject no true self-consciousness, See Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of DuBois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 66-95.

[218] DuBois, 6.

[219] Gooding-Williams, 80.
[220] DuBois, 5.
[221] DuBois says, "Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness,—it is the contradiction of double aims. The double-aimed struggle of the black artisan—on the one hand to escape white contempt for a nation of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and on the other hand to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde—could only result in making him a poor craftsman, for he had but half a heart in either cause. By the poverty and ignorance of his people, the Negro minister or doctor was tempted toward quackery and demagogy; and by the criticism of the other world, toward ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks. The would-be black savant was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood. The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul-beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the message of another people. This waste of double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people,—has sent them often wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves" (Souls, 6).
[222] *ibid*, 6-7.
[223] Delivering the majority opinion of the court, Justice Taney writes that black Americans are not citizens and can lay no claim to values stated in the Declaration of Independence. He writes, "In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show, that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument. […] They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion
of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics, which no one thought of disputing, or supposed to be open to dispute; and men in every grade and position in society daily and habitually acted upon it in their private pursuits, as well as in matters of public concern; without doubting for a moment the correctness of this opinion." See United States Supreme Court, Taney, R. B., et. al. *The Dred Scott decision: opinion of Chief Justice Taney* (New York: Van Evrie, Horton & Co., 1860), 19.
[224] DuBois, 7-8.
[225] *ibid*, 11.
[226] *ibid*, 11.

[227] Leon Litwack, *How Free Is Free?: The Long Death of Jim Crow* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

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