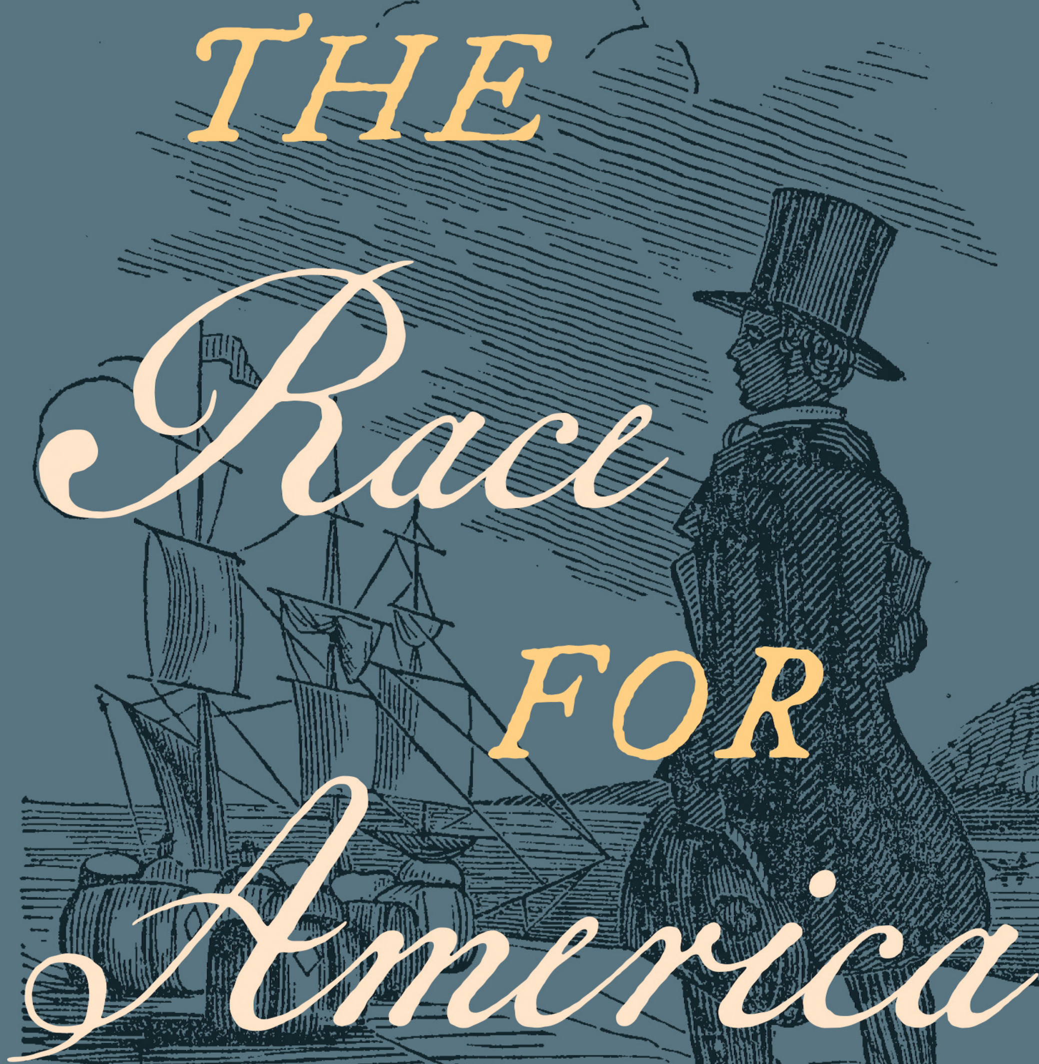
THE Race FOR America



BLACK INTERNATIONALISM IN THE AGE OF MANIFEST DESTINY

R. J. BOUTELLE

The Race for America

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Black Internationalism in the Age of Manifest Destiny

R. J. Boutelle

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Introduction

> Inevitably, it had occurred to some members of the Black petit bourgeoisie that their disadvantage in the ideological fray lay in part with their failure to engage the American legend. . . . In an America that was now being reconstituted by its ideologues on the mantle of a Manifest Destiny presumably inherited from its European origins, the Black intelligentsia had a historical basis that was too shallow to support their demand to be included in the nation's destinies.
>
> —CEDRIC ROBINSON, *Black Marxism* (1983)

This book begins in the tension of Cedric Robinson's observation that African Americans in the United States were at once alienated from the mythohistory of Manifest Destiny—which attributed the United States' meteoric rise in a few short decades to the purportedly God-guided progress of the "Anglo-Saxon" race—and eager to claim their deserved place within the millennial future of a nation their labors helped to build.[1] Rather than rejecting Manifest Destiny as an unredeemable vehicle for white nationalist and white supremacist ideologies, mid-nineteenth-century Black writer-activists engaged this paradigm to deepen their "too shallow" historical basis for inclusion within its vision of preordained national aggrandizement. The cacophonous intellectual tradition outlined in *The Race for America* spans practical emigration schemes, informal foreign policy, and theories of diaspora. Through this internationalist print culture, Black writer-activists proffered substitutes for and contestations of the "American legend" that took root during the feverish age of Manifest Destiny. Their engagements sought to unravel its premises and reweave them into novel arrangements of political borders and racial ontologies that could underwrite new forms of community, modes of governance, and grounds for solidarity. In doing so, they envisioned possibilities for how the Americas might develop differently from Manifest Destiny's fantasy of the United States' eventual hemispheric dominion or the realities of US-American neocolonialism that materialized in subsequent decades. At the same time, these Black enterprises were also vexed by the settler logics, imperial ambitions, and jingoistic exceptionalism of Manifest Destiny, rendering extranational territory as

terra nullius and appealing to providential design for their authority.[2] Many prospectuses for emigration, for example, espoused collaboration among Black settler-colonists from the United States and local Black and Brown populations in the regions to be settled, even as they restaged the colorist and classist social stratifications rooted in fictions of white supremacy and US-American exceptionalism. By navigating these frictions, this book narrates a Black counterhistory of Manifest Destiny in which the unrealized possibilities of Black hemispheric thinking serve as a repository of alternatives to Eurocentric narratives of the Americas' development. This study bolsters our understanding of the intimacies between US-American imperialism and Black internationalism, the dialectic of nationalism (US-American exceptionalism) and transnationalism (diaspora and transamericanism), and the remarkable pliability of race as the historical basis for a broad spectrum of intellectual and practical geopolitical experiments.

Following the robust expansion of the United States following the invasion of Mexico, anti-Black amendments to both the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (abandoning the Wilmot Proviso, which would have prohibited slavery in newly annexed territory) and the Compromise of 1850 (adopting the Fugitive Slave Law, which mandated federal, state, and local officials cooperate with enslavers and professional bounty hunters in the capture of refugees fleeing slavery) ushered in a decade of sea change in Black organizing. The 1850s were an intense period of philosophical and tactical disagreements among African Americans. A particularly polarizing debate began to emerge around a profound question: Was the United States redeemable, or should Black people look elsewhere for their liberty and enfranchisement? Some Black leaders who were, legally speaking, fugitives from slavery fled to England out of fear that their celebrity would not protect them from recapture, while others accompanied the thousands of African Americans who migrated to Canada after 1850. Others began advancing more radical arguments for Black nationalism, an umbrella term for a number of related movements invested in "the need for black people to rely primarily on themselves in vital areas of life—economic, political, religious, and intellectual—in order to effect their liberation."[3] Because these arguments included not only separatist movements within the United States but also variously scaled emigrationist projects, I argue that they also contributed to what scholars of later periods call Black internationalism. Defined as "an Afro-diasporic political and intellectual movement for global black liberation developed in response to slavery, white colonialism, and imperialism," Black internationalism is a segment of Black thought that "requires an awareness of a unified global

Black identity *and* a self-conscious struggle against racist oppression and white supremacy across national borders."[4]

Although these internecine debates have yielded a rich historiography of Black abolitionism, I want to reframe these exchanges as taking place within broader discourses: US-American foreign policy, the political (re)organization of the Americas, and even the idea of the Western Hemisphere itself. As Black intellectuals looked outside the United States for means of alleviating the suffering of African Americans within its swelling borders, they did so through the prism of US-American geopolitics. On the one hand, sites for Black resettlement would need to station emigrants outside the ambit of future US-American conquests; but on the other hand, the nation's actual expansion created new contact zones that enabled Black organizers to imagine and sometimes forge transnational coalitions with other colonized people of color. Although a minority position, emigrationism was not simply a fringe movement within an esoteric debate among antebellum intellectuals and activists, as is sometimes posited.[5] Rather, the explosion of Black internationalist energy in the mid-nineteenth century was integral to the discourses of Manifest Destiny that predominated the antebellum zeitgeist.

In what follows, I situate mid-nineteenth-century Black internationalism at the crossroads of the travels, translations, and failures that Brent Hayes Edwards calls the "practice of diaspora" and the political debates over inter-American foreign policy, diplomacy, and expansionism.[6] To that end, this study begins at the intersection of two geographically and conceptually capacious interdisciplinary fields that are less frequently in dialogue than I argue they should be: hemispheric American studies and studies of the Black Atlantic.[7] I build on Ifeoma Nwankwo's observation that hemispheric approaches to Black writing from the United States are not trendy innovations but methods responsive to "debates about the usefulness of associations (textual, material, or otherwise) with Latin America to US African-Americans' struggles" that are central to the texts themselves.[8] In kind, *The Race for America* posits that simultaneous attention to diasporic and hemispheric approaches to Black internationalism is paramount. Because the mid-nineteenth-century political milieu rendered toggling between these perspectives an urgent necessity for Black writer-activists, their interventions into these discourses often troubled the distinction between them. On the one hand, Manifest Destiny frames the so-called New World as a millennial geography where a chosen nation would become shepherds of Civilization: this mythological conceptualization of the Western Hemisphere as a discrete, distinctive, and divinely designated geography proved central to the

Black styling of African American culture as forged in the crucible of US-American greatness and providential preference endemic to the Americas.[9] It helped justify their belonging in the nation and the hemisphere. On the other hand, diaspora provided an indispensable hermeneutic for Black writers theorizing geopolitical alternatives to Manifest Destiny. Alienated from the "Anglo-Saxonist" explanation of US-American ascendance, they marshaled the biblical origins of diaspora to narrate Africans' displacement from their ancestral homes through transatlantic slavery to explain their own chosenness for the providential work at hand. Moreover, their attention to the mercurial social constructions of race, the escalation of (in)voluntary migration, and the diverse experiences of racialized oppression aided their articulation of new connections between African Americans in the United States and other colonized people.

But while such foundations enabled Black writer-activists to envision "new and unforeseen alliances and interventions on a global stage," Edwards cautions that "they also are characterized by unavoidable misapprehensions and misreadings, persistent blindnesses and solipsisms, self-defeating and abortive collaborations, a failure to translate even a basic grammar of blackness."[10] Throughout my discussions of Liberia, Nicaragua, Canada, and Cuba, I argue that Black internationalist writer-activists were often both (prospective) settler-colonists and radical freedom dreamers: romantic Pan-Africanists could strive to strengthen diasporic solidarities and advance the liberation struggle while nevertheless (deliberately or otherwise) functioning as agents of US-American Empire seeking to "civilize" non-US-American Black and Brown people. The ideological idioms of Manifest Destiny—US-American exceptionalism, providential chosenness, and expansion/colonization qua "civilizing mission"—shaped Black internationalist thinking during these dense decades of geopolitical reimagining. By attending to Black play with these idioms, I expose moments of *décalage*—"that which cannot be transferred or exchanged, the received biases that refuse to pass over"—that haunt the practices of diaspora expressed through their engagement with the imperialist frameworks of Manifest Destiny.[11] By rendering explicit how this discourse provided an influential grammar for Black internationalists, the chapters that follow immerse readers in cultural-historical milieus (Liberian colonization, prospectuses for an interoceanic canal in Nicaragua, mass migration to Canada, and solidarities with Cuban independence movements) to tease out remarkably innovative visions of Black liberation that are nevertheless (though to varying degrees) burdened by the logics of colonialism.

Significantly, though, my claim here is not that these movements merely reacted to the white political mainstream, and I want to caution against viewing these movements as simply mimetic. Rather than perpetuate a view of African Americans in the United States as strictly colonized subjects capable only of responding to hegemonic discourse, *The Race for America* positions Black internationalists as self-conscious interlocutors in geopolitical debates over the future of the United States and the American hemisphere—and as such, they were often required to engage in hegemonic terms. Robinson's framing of Black radical thought is instructive here:

> The social cauldron of Black radicalism is Western society. Western society, however, has been its location and its objective condition but not—except in a most perverse fashion—its specific inspiration. . . . This experience, though, was merely the condition for Black radicalism—its immediate reason for and object of being—but not the foundation for its nature or character. Black radicalism, consequently, cannot be understood within the particular context of its genesis. It is not a variant of Western radicalism whose proponents happen to be Black. Rather, it is a specifically African response to an oppression emergent from the immediate determinants of European development in the modern era and framed by orders of human exploitation woven into the interstices of European social life from the inception of Western civilization.[12]

Understanding Black internationalism in this earlier epoch, then, requires parsing how writer-activists' engagement with hemispheric geopolitics was crafted in the cauldron of Manifest Destiny "at a time when only national status conferred the right of political self-determination and when only certain types of 'civilization' conferred national status."[13] However restricting existing paradigms were, though, Black internationalist theories and practices were also articulated from distinctly African American perspectives rooted in experiences of diaspora, disenfranchisement, and dispossession—experiences that necessarily promoted more sensitive (if not always counterhegemonic) understandings of racialization, colonialism, and global capitalism.

Reading Black internationalism in the context of Manifest Destiny brings into relief this book's title—*The Race for America*—which nods to the wordplay animating Barbara Christian's landmark "The Race for Theory" (1987) and aims to amplify one of its central insights: that Black literature is theorizing.[14]

Riffing on this pun, *The Race for America* simultaneously evokes "race" as (1) social constructions of ancestry, embodiment, and identity; and (2) an ideological and geopolitical contest among competing visions of hemispheric development. For example, when President James K. Polk defended US-American claims to Oregon in 1845, it was one of the first invocations of what we now call the Monroe Doctrine (the United States proclaiming its intolerance of European interference in the Americas) as a foreign policy precedent since President James Monroe's 1823 message to Congress. Although Monroe's original remarks assert "a clear claim to manifest destiny," Polk's citation thereof to justify expansionism two decades later transformed Monroe's defense of separate spheres of influence into a defense of US-American intrahemispheric aggression in a zero-sum "competition for North American territory."[15] Manifest Destiny, therefore, positions expansion as a tactic within a race for continental dominion that was also bound up in an interimperial contest for controlling stakes in an increasingly global economy—a contest variously shaped by white nationalists' prescriptive and proscriptive claims about which populations were entitled to the land and rights of the Americas and which populations white US-Americans were authorized to deracinate and even destroy in the exercise of their putatively providential right to possess the hemisphere.

The Race for America thereby builds on foundational studies of Black internationalism in three important ways. First, I expand our understanding of this earlier era beyond domestic debates in Black culture between separatism and assimilation, between emigrationists and radical abolitionists. While critics like Robert Levine have influentially blurred these binaries, an enduring understanding of these debates as referring immediately and often exclusively to the issue of slavery overlooks an opportunity to reframe these movements as informed interventions into deliberations over expansionism and national/hemispheric mythology.[16] Embracing this opportunity, I dilate the scope of Black organizing in this era: if this activism constitutes "an ongoing political practice, a *parallel politics*, actualized in the face of official exclusion, derision, and violence" at the local, state, and national level, as P. Gabrielle Foreman contends, then this study extends this claim to examine how nineteenth-century Black parallel politics also engage foreign policy and international relations.[17] Second, even though these writings largely appeared in newspapers, pamphlets, and convention proceedings rather than in traditional literary forms, I nevertheless adopt explicitly literary methodologies in my examination of Black internationalist print culture.[18] Building on hemispheric scholarship attendant to aesthetic

movements like romanticism and sentimentalism as lenses for elucidating the trans-American origins of literary traditions, *The Race for America* regards Black internationalist writing as a laboratory for linguistic, rhetorical, and narrative experimentation that probes the limits of Manifest Destiny.[19] While this book makes no pretensions to delineating a new literary history, it does take seriously the literariness of Black geopolitical thought as a mode of *theorizing* (in Christian's sense of that word) the geospatial and geopolitical contents of the American hemisphere.

Finally, drawing on the more overt considerations of Black (anti)imperialism in the late nineteenth century in the writings of John Cullen Gruesser, Gretchen Murphy, and David Luis-Brown, I underscore that Manifest Destiny's primacy in the antebellum zeitgeist made it an unavoidable referent for African Americans in the United States.[20] This study therefore probes both the liberatory possibilities of Black internationalist thought (as a countermeasure against the overtly white supremacist, white nationalist mores of Manifest Destiny) and its perilous complicity within the colonizing impulses of US-American Empire and the enticements of US-American exceptionalism. As a means of tracking these considerations, *The Race for America* spotlights what I call the *georacial logics* that underwrite Manifest Destiny's political imagination. If, as Wilson Moses argues, "the ideological basis of nationalism is the idea that the people concerned are tied to a geographical region which they have either traditionally possessed or which they feel entitled to possess," then georacial logics name the modes of thinking, reasoning, and arguing that support the (re)arrangements of borders and populations espoused by a nationalist ideology like Manifest Destiny.[21] Refashioning the Monroe Doctrine's view of the Western Hemisphere as the exclusive purview of the United States, Manifest Destiny weaponizes georacial logics that conflate race and nation to underwrite its violent expansion, including the expropriation of lands from other nations, the genocidal deracination of Indigenous people, and the organized deportation of African Americans. Black internationalism intervened into foreign policy and geopolitical discourses dominated by Manifest Destiny; consequently, the projects that Black writer-activists envisioned were often indebted to georacial logics of their own, yielding ambitious diasporic collaborations that were nevertheless encumbered by colonialist, even imperialist, views of Black and Brown people outside the United States.

Through honest confrontations with how these earlier manifestations of Black internationalism were often beset by the same oppressive discourses they sought to disrupt, *The Race for America* divulges a Black intellectual

history that helps disturb the ideological clarity of Manifest Destiny's mission. On the one hand, although racialized claims about reorganizing American populations and borders were often based on ready-made understandings of racial affinities, distinctions, and hierarchies, what we also see during this era is a process through which writers naturalize race in order to naturalize national boundaries. Examining georacial logics helps unmask the processes by which these discourses conflate ideology and teleology, thereby justifying state aggressions aimed at aligning political maps with racial/national mythologies. On the other hand, Black writer-activists' competing visions of hemispheric geopolitics unveil how Manifest Destiny relies on dialectical tensions that its presumed coherence belies: its jingoistic nationalism depends on assimilationist expansionism that is ineluctably transnational; the essentialist "Anglo-Saxonism" that underwrites white supremacy depends on ongoing social constructions of whiteness to meet the needs of a demographically changing nation; and the revered republicanism animating US-American delusions of grandeur in contradistinction to tyrannical European monarchies also authorized the United States' supposed entitlement to override the sovereignty of other nations.

By intervening into the geopolitical debates occasioned by Manifest Destiny's discursive hegemony, Black intellectuals rendered visible the dialectical dynamics of the United States as an aspiring empire in a state of suspension between nationalism and transnationalism, republicanism and imperialism, and whiteness and multiculturalism—an unsettled state that afforded the enabling conditions for Black internationalism. Though their interventions may be fraught, they may still offer road maps not only for rethinking the history of nineteenth-century geopolitics but also for refashioning their insights into useful collaborations in the present, where the twin crises of climate disaster and late capitalism necessitate transnational perspectives on social justice.

Manifest Destiny, or How the West Was White

Although the neologism is usually credited to John L. O'Sullivan's 1845 essay on the annexation of Texas, the discourse that this book calls Manifest Destiny functions like Gretchen Murphy's characterization of the Monroe Doctrine: a constellation of acts, texts, and ideas that coalesced through evolving expressions over time and operated as "a cultural ideology rather than strictly as a foreign policy."[22] This distinction is vital to *The Race for America* because I am less concerned with Manifest Destiny's political outcomes

than the mythologies it embedded in the national consciousness. It was not simply an overzealous delusion of US-American grandeur that authorized continental expansion and military aggression; it was also a "motley body of justificatory doctrines" that lent credence to this agenda, including "metaphysical dogmas of a providential mission and quasi-scientific 'laws' of national development, conceptions of national right and ideals of social duty, legal rationalizations and appeals to 'the higher law,' aims of extending freedom and designs of extending benevolent absolutism."[23] Through a discursive rather than strictly political reading of Manifest Destiny, we can quickly recognize the overlap among its "justificatory doctrines" and the scientific, juridical, and ontological discourses of race that emerged concomitantly in this era. Amid intensifying debates over slavery that were intimately tied to debates over expansionism, Manifest Destiny efficiently ordered epistemes of nation, ethnology, and natural law into a mytho-history of "Anglo-Saxon" cultural supremacy that authorized a colonialist "civilizing mission." In his watershed work *Race and Manifest Destiny* (1981), Reginald Horsman details just how intricately interwoven these discourses are. As the English began colonizing North America, many colonists necessarily revisited their own national mythology, transitioning from the Arthurian legend to a more atavistic origin narrative, beginning with the Germanic nations that colonized the British Isles after the fall of the Roman Empire. By the 1770s, such reframing provided a useful contrast between monarchy (Arthurian legend) and premodern Germanic peoples' small representative local governments (Anglo-Saxon legend). With their successful decolonization from Great Britain, English settler-colonists came to understand their undertaking as continuing a sociopolitical project begun in the forests of Germany: "Americans would create a new society and new institutions, throwing off the corruptions and despotisms of Europe while beginning the establishment of a better world order," which had its roots in the "principles of popular government, freedom, and liberty introduced into England more than a thousand years before by the high-minded, freedom-loving, Anglo-Saxons."[24] Unlike the more modern "legend of decent from Columbus" that Sylvia Wynter argues comprises the 500-year "Lyotardian Grand Narrative of Progress . . . that impelled both the rise of the Western industrial civilization and the dynamic colonizing expansion of its 'way of life' into every part of the globe" and which relies on more capacious formulations of whiteness as "European and Euro-American," mid-nineteenth-century expressions of Manifest Destiny explicitly attributed US-American preeminence to an "Anglo-Saxonist" genealogy that allowed the United States to distinguish itself racially and

nationally from both continental Europe and competing Euro-American colonizers in the Americas.[25]

By highlighting how this ideological basis of Manifest Destiny lies in a revisionist "Anglo-Saxon" origin story, Horsman demonstrates how this discourse wedded racism and imperialism in North America. Medieval ideas of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*—progress narratives of Civilization, in which imperial power and knowledge, respectively, move continually westward—structured the United States' self-styling of its novel republican government (which purportedly perfected premodern Germanic peoples' modes of governance) as the zenith of Civilization. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, these narratives began to shape geographic thinking and foreign policy, exemplified by the Monroe Doctrine "map[ping] the political binary between Old World tyranny and New World democracy to a spatial construct that divides the globe into two hemispheres."[26] While European monarchies were enervated by imperial overextension (and the decolonization that resulted in Latin America and Haiti), the United States' democratic principles would allow it to grow exponentially without compromising the integrity of its governance or the righteousness of its vision. But whereas its original 1820s articulation aimed to deploy "spatial constructs to build a worldview," the Monroe Doctrine evolved as politicians increasingly and paradoxically invoked its isolationist foreign policy dictates to justify US-American colonialism within the Americas.[27] As the imperial worldview we call Manifest Destiny began to reshape the spatial construct of the hemisphere and the political applications of the Monroe Doctrine, these discourses differentiated white US-Americans from their European counterparts by rescripting the United States' accelerating intrahemispheric colonization as benevolent paternalism and a providentially sanctioned "civilizing mission" in contradistinction to the avaricious overseas conquests of European empires.

But as the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny bled into each other, they yielded a popular "mythic tradition of spatial and racial coherence that was always under siege and in need of affirmation."[28] Emergent discourses of racialist science, Horsman famously shows, provided just such an affirming foundation for these mythologies. Amid the nineteenth century's shift toward "a feverish interest in distinctly endowed human races—races with innately unequal abilities, which could lead either to success and world power or to total subordination and extinction," coalescing racialist discourses buttressed claims to a providential mission in North America with scientific explanations of "Anglo-Saxon" racial superiority.[29] In this way, Manifest Des-

tiny formed an ideological ouroboros in which US-American exceptionalism and white supremacy are both mutually constitutive and tautological: they collectively construct a mythological "Anglo-Saxon" past that explains US-American ascendance, justifies its expansionist "civilizing mission," and, in turn, evidences the "facticity" of that mythological past.

While a number of critics have productively explored the central contradiction between Manifest Destiny's imperialist appetites and racial ideology (How does a nation achieve a sprawling empire designed to colonize and assimilate people of color without compromising the very whiteness that putatively underwrites its authority to "civilize"?), I am more concerned with how its discourses evolved to reconcile this contradiction through white nationalism.[30] As historians like Matthew Frye Jacobson, Nell Irvin Painter, and David Roediger have shown, the waves of European immigration to the United States between the mid-nineteenth century and the Great War led to the "second great enlargement of whiteness," in which the clarity and simplicity of the "Anglo-Saxonism" Horsman details yielded to the idea of "a unified collectivity of European 'white men,' monolithic and supreme."[31] Unlike its narrower forebearer, white nationalism accommodates the expanded definitions of racial whiteness that evolved through expansionism and immigration, as well as cultural expressions/performances of whiteness from "assimilated" people of color.

This contention is critical to *The Race for America* because, as I explain more fully in my coda, both modern conservatism's open embrace of white nationalism and the temporally vague nostalgia of its animating mantra ("Make American Great Again") begin, in many ways, with Manifest Destiny—the primordial script of US-American chosenness, greatness, and whiteness. Frederick Merk, for instance, argues that while antebellum expansionist policies never enjoyed universal or even popular support in the United States, Manifest Destiny nevertheless activated a sense of "mission" central to a coalescing national identity in the mid-nineteenth century. Rooted in "city on a hill" imagery from the colonial era, US-Americans conceived themselves as exemplars and stewards of Civilization, resulting in a multivalent sense of duty: commitments to admit immigrants fleeing European monarchies to the "temple of freedom," to cultivate "a land of Eden" and maximize its "agricultural and mining potentialities," and to "regenerate backwards peoples of the continent."[32] Therefore, even if expansionism were controversial or uninspiring for everyday antebellum citizens, as Merk claims, it nevertheless established a sense of mission driven by what Aileen Moreton-Robinson calls "white possessive logics." By "circulat[ing] sets of meanings about

ownership of the nation, as part of commonsense knowledge, decision making, and socially produced conventions," Manifest Destiny uses Anglo-Saxonism to wed together the right to possess and the duty to protect the Americas from people of color and, in doing so, surreptitiously entrenches the fiction that the United States is a white ethnostate.[33]

That the United States has always been multicultural and that whiteness is socially constructed are not claims that need to be defended here; instead, I want to underscore how Manifest Destiny instrumentalizes this fiction to justify the preservation of a white hegemony even as territorial expansion and the centrality of slavery to economic growth made the nation-state necessarily pluralistic.[34] By operationalizing what we would now call white nationalism (an ideology that putatively disavows white supremacy while nevertheless arguing that "Anglo-Saxons" have a right to control an allegedly "Anglo-Saxon" ethnostate like the United States), Manifest Destiny attempts to reconcile US-American multiculturalism with that fiction by forging a regime of race and power characterized by what Koritha Mitchell calls "know-your-place aggression." Defined as "the flexible, dynamic array of forces that answer the achievement of marginalized groups such that their success brings aggression as often as praise," know-your-place aggression is an exhibition of white nationalism: it is a defense of white hegemony that manifests as rhetorical or physical violence designed to "keep [people of color] in their 'proper' place" within the United States.[35] In other words, any nonwhite presence in national space owes to the magnanimity of its white possessors and is conditional on enthusiastic subordination or assimilation. Moreover, that invitation—as the United States has always been happy to remind its citizens and residents of color—can be rescinded should they fail to adhere to the ideologies of whiteness by questioning doctrinaire celebrations of the nation's history/present or by simply proclaiming that their lives matter.

Manifest Diaspora, or Black Organizing in the Shadow of Empire

In narrating a Black counterhistory of Manifest Destiny, I elaborate an intellectual tradition of writer-activists both challenging its political program and reappropriating its rhetoric to envision more empowering alternatives for African Americans from the United States. Though often expressed through the grammar of diasporic racial uplift, these alternatives were not always empowering for Black and Brown people outside the United States.

Sensitive to these dynamics, *The Race for America* heeds Xiomara Santamarina's warning that "as appealing as diasporic modes of identification might be, exploring the specificity of location and temporality . . . requires working through the interdependence of US and black nationalism and exploring African-American contributions to nationalist rubrics as well as transnational ones."[36] I therefore foreground the dialectical tensions that Manifest Destiny's national mythology and imperial ambitions infused into Black internationalism.

The densest locus of these frictions emerges in Black efforts to differentiate *emigration* from *colonization*, a distinction that crystallizes in a series of debates printed in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* after the Colored National Convention in Rochester in July 1853—the first national convention since the Fugitive Slave Law. Convention-goers vociferously rejected the resurgent American Colonization Society (ACS), whose project of removing free African Americans from the United States to Liberia found renewed support in that decade: "We have no sympathy with it," they proclaimed, "having long since determined to plant our trees on American soil, and repose beneath their shade."[37] The delegates then circulated William Lloyd Garrison's anti-colonizationist tract *Thoughts on Colonization* (1832), and though J. W. C. Pennington's scathing "Report on Colonization" was not printed in time for the convention, it was included in the published proceedings. Their opposition extended in kind to Black prospectuses for organized emigration from the United States, which delegates viewed as either complicit with or subsumable into white deportation efforts. A month later, forty-six Black emigrationists from the United States and Canada responded to their exclusion from the Rochester meeting by calling for a National Emigration Convention in Cleveland. Critical of the previous convention's optimism about Black prospects within the United States and its unfair conflation of emigrationism with colonization, the organizers intended to show the advantages of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America for resettlement, while also emphasizing that "no favors will be shown to [colonizationists] or their expatriating scheme, as we have no sympathy with the enemies of our race."[38] Recognizing that "colonization" terminologically sanitized the white-led ACS's programmatic deportations by implying that they were voluntary relocations, these organizers self-styled as emigrationists to underscore their investments in Black self-determination.[39] This rebranding, however, downplayed the settler-colonial drives of their own enterprises by stressing voluntary departure (emigration) over unwelcome arrival (colonization)—a maneuver that was at best, naive, and at worst, dissimulation.

In the lead-up to the National Emigration Convention, a heated public debate unfolded about the merits and dangers of these proposals. Douglass and his assistant editor, William Watkins, used his eponymous newspaper to scrutinize what they viewed as a well-intentioned but misguided movement. In his initial rejoinder to these public misgivings, emigrationist and poet James Whitfield audaciously asserted that emigration was not a craven abnegation of duty to enslaved people or others unwilling to leave the United States but rather a path to a more sacred vocation: "I believe it is to be the destiny of the negro, to develop a higher order of civilization and Christianity than the world has yet seen. I also consider it a part of his 'manifest destiny,' to possess all the tropical regions of this continent, with the adjacent islands."[40] Whitfield both recognizes and riffs on Manifest Destiny. Without ceding the United States fully to "Anglo-Saxons," he allows that North America was their divinely sanctioned domain in order to extend the logic of Manifest Destiny and issue a corollary consistent with its georacial logic: the Caribbean, Central America, and South America were the realm of African Americans. James Theodore Holly also reappropriated the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny in a similar appeal a few years later: "We must not overlook this practical vantage ground which Providence has raised up for us out of the depths of the sea." But rather than historicizing the descendants of "Anglo-Saxons" shepherding a millennial society in the Americas as "Civilization and Christianity [pass] from the East to the West," Holly supplants this narrative with the East-to-West movement of kidnapped West Africans trafficked to the Americas, where they and their descendants eventually fought a revolutionary war (the decolonization of Saint-Domingue) that perfected the flawed republicanism of the United States in Haiti. As a result, it was not the "Anglo-Saxon" but rather "this negro nationality of the New World" whose "glory and renown shall overspread and cover the whole earth."[41] Underlying these claims is a sense of diasporic solidarity, what Moses limns as "the feeling on the part of black individuals that they are responsible for the welfare of other black individuals, or of black people as a collective entity, simply because of a shared racial heritage and destiny" and a shared sense of "mutual oppression and humiliation" wrought by slavery, deracination, and diaspora.[42] Of particular interest to me, however, is what happens when these ideals collide with emigrationism in practice. Whitfield's rhetoric—echoed throughout many emigrationist writings—merges ethical concerns about diasporic solidarity with Black investments in US-American exceptionalism to propagate a settler-colonial fantasy of a "civilizing mission," distorting many emigrationists' dispositions toward prospective allies into chauvinis-

tic condescension reminiscent of their white oppressors.[43] Significantly, although these articulations seemingly affirm the United States' preeminence, they are also part of a deliberate (if diffuse) campaign to confront Manifest Destiny, delimiting its imperial dominion to North America rather than the entire hemisphere.

Unlike fin de siècle decolonial Black internationalist enterprises that "turn critical perspectives on U.S. imperialism in Latin America to the political advantage of the oppressed in both regions," many of the Black geopolitical visions designed to contest Manifest Destiny betray the colonialist traces of dominant discourse, characterizing emigrants as settler-colonial saviors positioned to redeem Latin America and the Caribbean.[44] Whitfield, for example, recommends "the concentration, as far as possible, of the black race in the central and southern portions of America, so that it may exercise its proper influence in moulding the destiny, and shaping the policy of the American Continent," a proposition that adopts the colonialist lens of a terra nullius fantasy of open season on "unclaimed" or "uninhabited" territories that were, of course, already both claimed and inhabited. Such a path to African Americans "securing a proper field for the full development of [their] own power and resources" outside the United States necessarily wrested land, power, resources, and rights from other colonized and dispossessed populations.[45] Tellingly, Whitfield's repetition of "proper" here implicitly lambasts the *improper* influence that Manifest Destiny was increasingly exerting. He insinuates that a Black cultural and demographic hegemony would constitute a *more proper* influence on the Americas because its articulation from subjugated positionalities furnishes more sensitivity to the power dynamics of racialization, migration, settlement, and statecraft. Its efforts to imagine the hemisphere differently than Manifest Destiny, therefore, contain at least the promise for more equitable forms of relationality. Emigrationism, for instance, "rendered African Americans 'transnational' by default," encouraging the exploration of new affiliations and community bonds beyond those prescribed by Euro-American racialist science, theories of nationalism, and impositions of political borders.[46] Nevertheless, we must evaluate such possibilities cautiously. What exactly would such enterprises look like? How might this *more proper* influence reshape the hemisphere as both a geographical and a mythological construct? What forms of state power, international relations, and multiracial democracy could be imagined from a Black perspective? What kinds of coalitions might become possible? How would Black governance of a pluralistic population differ from white nationalism? Could Black dominion slow, reroute, or even forestall US-American

expansion? And could it ever be anti-imperialist when mediated through the grammar of Manifest Destiny?

In teasing out these questions as they emerge from Black internationalist thought, I argue that these projects for reconfiguring the Americas can best be characterized as Black *disidentifications* with Manifest Destiny. A survival strategy for minority subjects navigating dominant ideology, disidentification "neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor simply opposes it" but rather "works on and against dominant ideology." Significantly, in defining this concept, José Esteban Muñoz summons a familiar oppositional dyad in Black intellectual culture: the assimilationism of Booker T. Washington versus the anti-assimilationism of W. E. B. DuBois. Rather than an "apolitical middle ground" between these respective positions, disidentification is "clearly indebted to antiassimilationist thought" but strategically avoids its trappings because "it understands that counterdiscourses, like discourse, can always fluctuate for different ideological ends and a politicized agent must have the ability to adapt and shift as quickly as power does within discourse."[47] Muñoz's example is doubly prudent for my purposes. First, the reductive integrationist–separatist binary of Black intellectual history arguably begins with the clashes between radical abolitionists and emigrationists outlined in the preceding pages.[48] While this distinction provides a useful metanarrative for organizing three centuries of African American theorizing, it also dissolves under scrutiny as these seemingly mutually exclusive ideologies confront the messy realties of Black lived experience.[49] Second, because disidentification pushes us beyond this Manichean binary, it instead offers paths to analyze strategies for engaging with dominant ideology (Manifest Destiny) through a discursive process of deconstruction and reconstruction: "Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture."[50] As a number of scholars have noted, complex relationships that mid-nineteenth-century Black organizers forged with/against the public sphere produced similarly complex disidentifications with white conceptualizations of the nation, democracy, and citizenship.[51] To extend this work to Black engagement with Manifest Destiny, I posit

disidentification as a useful tool for parsing the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction in Black internationalist thinking. When Whitfield and Holly write of a Black "manifest destiny," for example, they practice what Muñoz calls *tactical misrecognition* by answering the Althusserian hail that was not intended for them and that emanated from an ideological apparatus that conceptualizes them as unable to answer it. That is, while Manifest Destiny addresses them as subjects who must either assimilate into a growing white nationalist empire or seek refuge beyond the ambit of its imperial ambitions, Black internationalists subversively heed that calling as subjects tasked with a more active role in shaping the hemisphere's geopolitical reorganization. Through the recircuiting process of disidentification, Black internationalists lay bare the macros of Manifest Destiny that automate its tautological self-rationale (white superiority authorizes white domination, which proves white superiority) and then rewrite the code in the same programming language (georacial logic).

"Who Cuts the Border?"

Questions regarding how "America" came to name a discrete geographic space (hemisphere) have long preoccupied scholars in North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Foundational texts in hemispheric studies have considered the cultural basis for such a distinction, asking if the Americas possess a common history or a common literature, debating when and how America was invented, and charting the development of the "Western Hemisphere" as an ideological and spatial concept.[52] Beginning in the 1990s, though, anti-imperialist and transnational turns in scholarship from and about the United States imbued these questions with a new energy that remains central to US-American studies, indexed by Janice Radway (1998), Amy Kaplan (2003), Shelley Fisher Fishkin (2004), and Emory Elliot (2007) in their respective presidential addresses to the American Studies Association and a wave of brilliant books in the early 2000s.[53] But while monographs in a field with pretensions to a hemispheric scope individually and collectively constitute "an intriguing partiality of perspectives" that Paul Giles celebrates as a humbling recognition that such labor necessitates "a communal enterprise," they also produce a sense of incoherence about the field itself, leading Dana Nelson to gloss hemispheric studies as a compilation of "virtuoso solo performances of scholarly communication still hoping for the possibility of an organized response."[54] In other words, while its lack of coherence and agreement about the meaning of "the hemisphere" is expected and even desirable,

it also poses logistical problems when bringing such diverse writings about such diverse texts from such diverse places into dialogue with one another. To the extent that this field has moved together, decades of scholarship have recast the United States as "uneasily tied to the larger hemisphere even in its most exceptionalist incarnations" and amplified "the domain of the term 'American' into other languages and other spaces aside from the obvious centers of political and artistic activity."[55] So while "it is no longer critically engaging to simply announce one's work in American literary studies as being 'transnational,'" the mundaneness of such an intervention today owes largely to the "very successes that make this 'new' approach not so new anymore."[56]

To the extent that *The Race for America* issues its own call for a "new" direction, it documents missed connections between hemispheric and Black Atlantic paradigms that implore more explicit dialogue between them.[57] The primary explanation for this disconnect is also the simplest: "the hemisphere" at the heart of hemispheric studies is commonly understood as a *totum pro parte* for the "New World," or the Americas, even though its geographical definition (the space delineated by the prime meridian to the east and the antemeridian to the west) includes portions of West Africa. While Amy Kaplan rightly observes that "the presence of Africa—and the absence of its inhabitants"—have played a foundational role in displacing the anxieties of US-American imperialism onto "a repressed third realm of the unnarrated stories of colonization, slavery, and resistance that link both continents," the figurative and literal circumscription of West Africa from hemispheric studies returns me to a rhetorical question that Hortense Spillers poses in her introduction to *Comparative American Identities* (1991): "Who cuts the border?"[58] Rooted in an anecdote about property lines and lawn-care responsibilities, her reflections on the "America/US order of things" prompt her to ask, "By what finalities of various historico-cultural situations are we frozen forever in precisely defined portions of culture content?" Her answer, in the parlance of the conceit, is that "there are days when her household cuts the border, then there are days when someone else's does." While this metaphor illustrates the arbitrariness of the areas that comprise area studies ("the shifting position of the socionom"), it also highlights how mundane routines and rituals naturalize borders.[59] It explains, for instance, how although the Western Hemisphere technically entails West Africa, transnationally oriented Black writers have traditionally situated themselves (or *been* situated) within studies of the Black Atlantic and therefore outside the circumscribed scope of hemispheric studies. Even when comparative or transnational works

limit their examinations to North America and the Caribbean, the focus on Black subjects and the implicit triangulation of Africa seemingly locate this intrahemispheric scholarship outside a hemispheric studies frame.[60]

In highlighting these missed connections, I do not mean to suggest that there is a paucity of transnational and comparative approaches to African American literature throughout the Americas. Indeed, quite the opposite is true. Instead, I spotlight this lacuna within hemispheric studies precisely because Black contributions to this field—in the nineteenth century and today—have been overlooked in the intellectual and geopolitical histories of the "hemisphere" as an idea. *The Race for America* therefore strives to center Black writers within what Judith Madera calls "one of the most volatile periods of United States national formation"—a period in which the millennial vision for US-American growth and achievement was deeply imbricated with questions about where, how, why, and by whom the hemisphere should be subdivided.[61] Unsurprisingly, hegemonic discourses like Manifest Destiny set the terms of these geographic debates. "One of the final moves of conquerors, after conquest," Carole Boyce Davies observes, "is the dividing up of territories, creating unnatural boundaries and thus ushering in perpetual struggle over space and place."[62] The production and justification of such "unnatural boundaries," however, requires narrativization and naturalization. As Katherine McKittrick reminds us, "Practices of domination, sustained by a unitary vantage point," collaborate in order to "naturalize both identity and place, repetitively spatializing where nondominant groups 'naturally' belong."[63] Exemplary of such a "unitary vantage point," Manifest Destiny's georacial logics wed place and race, naturalizing racial differences in order to naturalize national borders, and vice versa, all while asserting US-American expansionism as the means of restoring the "natural" arrangement of people and perimeters.

Beyond simply naming how social constructions of geography materialize imperial and racist ideologies, *The Race for America* joins these Black cartographic thinkers in documenting how African Americans contest vexed configurations of space. A literary analysis of proposed and actual Black border crossings (through emigration movements, for example) affords an unraveling of white nationalist narrativizations of the "American hemisphere" as a naturally white space. The "dismantling of received geography" and the unthinking of the ontological terms by which "the meaning of location and ownership is already defined" become the purview of empire's displaced subjects (here, African Americans), for whom concepts like home, exile, and identity are fraught, polylithic, and even diffuse.[64] Black disidentifications

with Manifest Destiny sever and recircuit its recursive georacial logics, unmaking and remaking understandings of space as they imagine and practice freedom. In its place, the diverse range of racial and spatial theorizing that emerges from Black disidentifications with that discourse can be best summarized as what Erna Brodber calls "a continent of Black consciousness." Against the georacial logic of Manifest Destiny's white nationalist imperialism in which "natural" differences emerge from and must be contained by "natural" borders, Black internationalist thought imagines "a continent of black consciousness which included Africa and the geographic area to which Africans were dispersed from the earliest days of New World slavery to Garvey's time."[65] The slippages in Brodber's language here are instructive. First, what she names as a "continent" is actually the Western Hemisphere, implicitly critiquing that term's conflation with "the Americas" and its ubiquitous exclusion of Africa. Second, her emphasis on an area including the Atlantic and the Caribbean further challenges the geographical definition of *continent* ("one of the main continuous bodies of land on the earth's surface" and "the land as opposed to the water"). Instead, she evokes an archaic sense of a continent as "a containing agent or space."[66] In privileging this more literally and figuratively fluid term for what others have called the hemisphere, Brodber foregrounds the constant renegotiation of borders and meanings contained within Black thought. Ultimately, this fluidity (the anti-assimilationist posture of disidentification) becomes Black internationalism's liberationist potential—an openness to revision and reorientation that the grammar of destiny and the congealing discourses of naturalization (georacial logics) do not afford.

It is hopefully clear by now how Black intellectual history presents the field of nineteenth-century hemispheric studies with an urgent "opportunity for alterity and unforeseen problems that do not correlate with the geographic and spatial conceptualization of what Americas work entails."[67] *The Race for America* employs local contexts and overlapping American histories to highlight how the kinds of cultural collisions enacted through diaspora and migration enabled Black writer-activists to (re)invent identities and affinities organizing American populations. But one such "unforeseen problem" that this study also exposes is the colonialist constraints of their imaginations, which remained deeply invested in fantasies of US-American exceptionalism. By tracking these strategic challenges to the fateful narrative that US-American hemispheric hegemony was inevitable, I weigh both the possibilities and limitations of antebellum Black internationalists' efforts to conceptualize more equitable modes of hemispheric relations in the hopes

that a full reckoning with this ambitious collection of geopolitical prospectuses might prove instructive for those of us trying to imagine liberatory futures in the present.

Chapter Outlines

The chapters of this book are roughly organized around contested sites where Black internationalism and US-American expansionism vied to situate these nations and colonies into their distinctive geopolitical mythologies. The chapters progress from Black georacial logics that are more mimetic in nature (finding empowerment in the "civilizing mission" of Liberian colonization, claiming cosmopolitan US-American citizenship, or imagining Black imperialism in Central America) to modes of thinking that are more deeply invested in the experiences of diaspora (building Black Canadian communities as borderlands or experimenting with diasporic political praxes triangulated through the United States, Cuba, and Africa).

Before outlining what follows, I want to address what may seem a glaring lacuna in this study: I do not dedicate a chapter to Haiti. Although Haiti was a singularly significant symbol for the Black diaspora, a crucial locus of Black political theorizing, and the destination of two different Black emigration movements (in the 1820s and again in the 1850s), the successes of the Haitian Revolution were a powerful deterrent against both US-American annexation and Black settler-colonialism.[68] Because of the forcefulness with which the people of Saint-Domingue decolonized and emancipated themselves, as well as the Haitian Constitution's declaration that all its citizens were officially Black, the United States did not seriously contemplate annexing Haiti until after the Civil War—and even then, plans were mediated through proposals to annex Spanish Santo Domingo.[69] Put simply, the United States was dissuaded by the prospect of reenslaving Haitians (which risked not only stoking violent resistance and suffering the same fate as the French but also prompting that violence to spread to the US-American South), and the incorporation of Haiti as a free Black state was a nonstarter for even the most progressive white politicians. At the same time, although Haitian independence was an enduring source of pride for African Americans, its lack of popularity as a prospective site for Black emigration from the United States ironically owes to that independence.[70] Even avid exponents of Haitian emigration were convinced that the US "system of government was the most advanced in the world—if not in practice, at least in potential"—and that "Haitians remained a remote 'other,' who were desperately in need of

spiritual as well as material regeneration."[71] Emigrationists had no intention of seeking refuge under the protections of an existing government, even a Black one, but rather sought to consolidate Black populations abroad in order to seize power or establish their own government. Furthermore, even though interest among African Americans from the United States in Haitian emigration rekindled in the 1850s, the framing of these efforts is much more cautious. Black internationalists consistently "championed Haitian sovereignty," as Leslie Alexander argues, viewing the republic "as a model for their own liberation movements," so any insinuation that Black immigrants intended to wrest control from the Haitians would undermine arguments about Black self-government and the Haitian Revolution's extraordinary achievement. For example, when James Theodore Holly traveled to Haiti in 1855 and presented Emperor Faustin I with "a detailed plan for emigration, including requests for land, citizenship, religious freedom, exemption from military service, and a series of other financial inducements," Haiti rejected the proposed terms but remained open to accepting Black asylum-seekers; undeterred, but deferential to Haitian sovereignty, Holly turned his persuasion campaign back toward the United States.[72] Owing to both the preponderance of recent scholarship on Haiti and the distinct nature of its position with US-American imperialism and Black internationalism, I deliberately attend to other regions in hopes of expanding even further the geographic purview of Black internationalism.

Chapter 1 employs Manifest Destiny as a cipher for discerning the uncomfortable overlap between the missions of white and Black nationalists within the longest-running and most robustly organized Black expatriation movement: the white-conceived project of Liberian colonization. For white colonizationists, Manifest Destiny's achievements meant that African Americans reared in the cradle of US-American republicanism, Christianity, and capitalism could now be installed as imperial agents to extend the "civilizing mission" back eastward into Africa. Moreover, they argued, such deployments were necessary for the preservation of the nation's whiteness, which they viewed as crucial to its success. For Black nationalists, conversely, undertaking the "civilizing mission" in Africa was a duty, equally shaped by the ethics of diaspora and the superciliousness of internalized US-American exceptionalism. As a case study for these intersecting interests, I examine *The Looking-Glass* (1854), the autobiography of African Methodist Episcopal reverend Daniel Peterson. Sponsored by colonizationists, Peterson traveled to West Africa and penned a glowing report of colonization's vision and progress, yet he returned to and remained in the United States. Through a reading of the

narrative content and ostentatious material form of *The Looking-Glass*, I ultimately argue that Peterson exploited colonizationist fervor not only to fund his travels and publishing but also to enable his self-narrativization as a US-American citizen. Although his condescending account of Liberia supports the settler-colonial project and affirms the purported cultural supremacy of the United States, he does not embrace a role for himself on an errand into the African wilderness. Instead, he self-presents as a middle-class bootstrapper whose moral judgments and religious leadership *within* the United States are just as important for racial uplift as the work in Africa. In doing so, he embraces the colonizationist conceptualization of African Americans as prepared to undertake the labor of the "civilizing mission" but refuses the efforts of white nationalists to reroute those labors away from the continental United States.

Because most Black intellectuals understood Liberian colonization as the racist culmination of white nationalism's efforts to displace populations of color from the United States and therefore rejected it, chapter 2 turns to Black efforts to stake a georacial claim to terrain within the Americas. Articulated most forcefully at the 1854 National Emigration Convention in Cleveland, this political philosophy quickly identified Central America as an ideal location for Black resettlement and nation-building. As an already hotly contested site where the United States and Great Britain were sparring over the prospects of a trade-revolutionizing interoceanic canal, Nicaragua emerged in the Black imagination as a majority "colored" republic poised to develop into a bustling hub of international commerce. This chapter examines two competing prospectuses for what Nicaragua might look like as a "colored republic." The first of these is Martin Delany's Black imperialist vision, which proposed that small enclaves of African Americans from the United States could colonize the Mosquito Coast and enact a democratic takeover of local government that would eventually grow to span most of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Moreover, along with colleagues at the National Emigration Convention, he renarrates the colonization of the Americas as a history of Black excellence in the face of oppression and adversity, providing the mythological foundation for his claims that it is, in fact, African Americans' Manifest Destiny to lead Central America, South America, and the Caribbean into a millennial age. The second thread follows the writings of James McCune Smith, a Black physician and radical abolitionist who partially inspired the Black nationalist turn to Nicaragua. In particular, his 1852 review of white archaeologist-diplomat E. G. Squier's groundbreaking ethnography, *Nicaragua: Its People,*

Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal (1852), issues its own provocative transnational theory of race, racial amalgamation, and community-building, rooted in the mytho-history of Communipaw—a multiracial colony predicated on diversity, exchange, and egalitarianism, and McCune Smith's pseudonym in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Whereas Squier attempts to manipulate demographic data on Nicaragua to advertise the republic as an ideal site for US-American paternalism and colonization and whereas Delany and others envisioned Black emigration as a means of establishing an African American empire, McCune Smith argues that Nicaragua is uniquely situated (geographically, economically, and politically) to reimagine a new Central American Communipaw. Because he viewed the interchange of diverse ideas and the preservation of a diverse community as essential to the asymptotic advance of Civilization, he ultimately argues that the constant flow of trade and travel through Nicaragua would foster just such an ever-evolving multiracial community.

Whereas these Central American projects were primarily rhetorical and largely unactuated, chapter 3 pivots to examine the lived experiences within the rapidly growing Black settlements that developed in Canada West (modern Ontario) after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Because of its proximity to the United States, Canada offered the most practical site for emigrants and refugees fleeing slavery; but this proximity also left the region vulnerable to US-American expansionism, resulting in unique insights as Black settler-colonists forged new communities under the shadow of Manifest Destiny. Consequently, the multidirectional population flows, mix of permanent and temporary planning, and constant threat of US-American annexation/invasion prompt me to theorize the region as Black borderlands. I focus on the lives of Henry Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd—emigrants from the United States and competing newspaper editors whose storied rivalry has largely been framed as a synecdoche for broader debates about separatism (Bibb) versus integrationism (Shadd). From their liminal geographic positions in the US-Canada borderlands, these writers challenge the primacy of the nation as the fundamental organizing unit of Black nationalism. Instead, they draw on both the colonial status of Canada West (barricaded from US-American encroachment under the protection of the British Empire and yet only loosely accountable to British governance) and the redemption of American republicanism outside the United States to imagine new forms of community. Because their conceptualizations of Black Canada stem from their respective personal histories, I especially attend to how Bibb and Shadd used the space of Canada West to reconceptualize gender roles and to rethink the patriar-

chal mores formed within the United States. For Bibb, this entailed providing refugees from slavery access to the white bourgeois ideals of masculinity/femininity from which slavery formally proscribed them, thereby facilitating racial uplift in Canada; for Shadd, Canada West presented an opportunity to expose and explode the patriarchal underpinnings of US-American slavery and republicanism, imagining new feminist modes of community-building in their place.

The fourth and final chapter turns from the empirical theories of Black organizing in the US-Canada borderlands to the speculative possibilities of diaspora that could be triangulated through the United States, Cuba, and Africa. In contradistinction to the imperialist marriage of the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny that increasingly characterized US-American foreign policy, Black writer-activists used diaspora as both a theory and a method for forging alternative diplomatic relations with Cuba. Beginning with the Africanization of Cuba crisis in 1853 and the subsequent efforts of the United States to annex the island as a slave state, the first half of this chapter offers an extended reading of Martin Delany's novel *Blake, or the Huts of America* (first serialized in the *Anglo-African Magazine* and the *Weekly Anglo-African* in 1859 and 1861–62, respectively), focusing on how the author's (sometimes limited, sometimes extensive) familiarity with Cuban culture and his routing of inter-American antislavery resistance through Africa inform both the US-American and Cuban sections of the novel. To navigate this expansive terrain, Delany practices what Vèvè Clark calls "diaspora literacy" by charting the potency of Africanist epistemologies, novel religious practices, and cultural translation to dismantle structures of power shaped by the narrow Euro-American notions of nationalism.[73] By taking seriously the process of Africanization, Delany develops practices for organizing and executing a revolution that both represents and constitutes diaspora. I then turn from Delany's speculative fiction to a postbellum convention where the Africanization of Cuba presents real political potential for reshaping hemispheric relations. At the 1872 meeting of the Cuban Anti-Slavery Society in New York, Henry Highland Garnet and his co-organizers petitioned the US-American government to recognize the belligerency rights of an anticolonial insurrection in Cuba (the Ten Years' War [1868–78]). As a contribution to the energetic Black reimagining of democracy in the years following the Civil War, the convention provided a platform for exercising their newly won citizenship rights and developing Black foreign policy that could shape US-American policy and provide an alternative back channel for international diplomacy. Rooted in the realization that Black freedom in the United States

was tenuous until slavery was abolished everywhere, the convention articulated practices of diasporic solidarity that attempted to actualize the kinds of trans-American political alliances that could previously exist only in fiction.

Ultimately, *The Race for America* emphasizes Black engagement with georacial logics (as a mode of theorizing) over geopolitical outcomes. In doing so, I both perpetuate and interrogate the figuration of emigrationism and internationalism as esoteric intramural debates within free, educated Black communities. Indeed, with the exception of the white-sponsored colonization of Liberia (where many migrants were deported involuntarily), 1820s Haitian programs to induce Black immigration, and the massive wave of refugees from slavery fleeing to Canada after 1850, very few Black people ever participated in organized emigration movements—and many who did, returned after the Civil War. In fact, most of the Black internationalist enterprises discussed throughout this book were ambitious, aspirational thought experiments designed to reimagine counterfactually the world in which Manifest Destiny intractably situated Black people. To dismiss them as strictly speculative, however, is to miss these writer-activists' profound contributions to Black intellectual history. First, the unrealized character of these Black prospectuses is not a problem needing qualification but an opportunity for analysis. I join a number of transnationalist scholars in questioning the overdetermined histories of US-American imperialism and hemispheric political development, where "contingencies go by the wayside and historical actors are subsumed to the history that has already happened and thus is conceived of as inevitable."[74] Raúl Coronado and Lisa Lowe theorize these contingencies grammatically, adopting "the future-in-past tense of the auxiliary 'would' and inchoative aspect of 'become,' rather than the past tense proper" and "the *past conditional temporality* of 'what could have been,'" respectively.[75]

To take seriously the unactualized goals of Black organizers is not to regard them ahistorically but rather to contextualize their thinking within their historical milieu. Put simply, during the dramatic reorganization of borders, power, and populations in the interregnum between the invasion of Mexico and the Civil War, the geopolitical development of the Americas into its modern arrangement was anything but assured, and the configuration that eventually took shape was one of myriad directions that *might have*. Invested in what Robert Levine characterizes as the "need to recover a sense of possibility (and provisionality and contingency) in the past that will help us to reconceive our own moment as a time of possibility (and provisionality and contingency)," I focus on the unrealized potentialities of Black

internationalism—a subjunctive counterhistory of hemispheric development apart from the US-American neocolonial dominion that would entrench itself in the Americas in the late nineteenth century.[76] In doing so, my work explores the kinds of "political designs that never did come to pass" but whose geopolitical visions were nevertheless shaped by "ground-level contingenc[ies]" of rhetorically and physically encountering other people of color in the hemisphere—encounters that set in relief "the particularities of [their] ethical claims" and perhaps their enduring usefulness as we continue to reexamine the racialized power dynamics of borders and nations in the Americas.[77]

Exposing the gap in certitude between past and present elaborates the urgency of reconsidering formative moments to unthink the legacies of imperialism, colonialism, and racial capitalism. As Lowe writes, attending to "the scene of loss" foments "thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social science, and also the matters absent, entangled, and unavailable by its methods."[78] These exertions, therefore, are not simply romances of recovery or a restoration of silenced voices. Instead, they lay the groundwork for new methodologies in which counterfactuals, unrealized prospectuses, and speculative trajectories become primary sources in a counterhistory. I highlight this trend in transnational US-American studies because Black studies can answer—and, indeed, has been answering—these calls. While this work is most evident in Saidiya Hartman's critical fabulations of both "positive objects" (extant albeit fragmentary archives) and "the problem of the archive" (the absence of materials owing to the orality of Black culture, record keepers' devaluations of Black writings, the obstruction of Black perspectives in white historical accounts, and even domestic terrorism like the 1872 arson that destroyed Frederick Douglass's home and papers in Rochester, New York), it is also acute in innovative print cultural approaches to nineteenth-century Black studies and Black studies approaches to nineteenth-century print culture.[79]

Second, although the states, colonies, and communities that Black internationalists envisioned were aspirational, not actual, this does not mean that the ideological discourses and activist networks that cultivated these enterprises failed to exert an impact on foreign policy. Martin Delany provides a concise case study. Though predominant in Black studies, his works are almost always discussed with the caveat that his writings went largely unread in their time.[80] Perhaps his most widely read work was his address at the 1854 National Emigration Convention. Transmitted through the published

Proceedings, it circulated widely in the United States and beyond.[81] In fact, after reading an 1858 congressional address in which Rep. Francis P. Blair Jr. (R-MO) proposed federal appropriations to sponsor Black emigration to Central America, Delany sent him a copy of *Proceedings*, recommending special attention be paid to his "Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent." Blair read the pamphlet, and four years later he shared it with the presidentially appointed Select Committee on Emancipation and Colonization. That committee introduced H. R. 576 (an emancipation bill allocating $20 million for deporting African Americans to Central America) to the House floor at the behest of President Abraham Lincoln and published a report with supporting materials, including the full text of "Political Destiny."[82] In addition to circulating throughout Black activist print networks, then, Delany's speech reached at least an additional 10,000 readers around Capitol Hill in 1862 via an official congressional report published by the government printing office.[83] One of those readers was almost certainly Lincoln himself, a claim bolstered by his infamous actions later that summer. Less than a week after the select committee published its report, with Congress in recess and the Civil War intensifying, Lincoln began considering executive action on abolition and drafted an initial Emancipation Proclamation for his cabinet. On 14 August (just a month after the report), Lincoln invited five Black leaders to the White House, where he delivered a disastrous address advising them of impending congressional appropriations for Black deportation and petitioning them to persuade their own communities to take advantage of the program. A compelling explanation for why Lincoln felt so emboldened to pursue such an audacious gambit would be his familiarity with the fervent oratory and exaggerated solidarity expressed in Delany's "Political Destiny."[84] Consequently, I do not want to overemphasize the unfinished work of antebellum Black internationalism such that we overlook these very real material impacts they exerted on US-American politics.

By emphasizing simultaneously both the power of speculation and the realities of power, *The Race for America* details a Black counterhistory of Manifest Destiny whose most radical possibilities are nevertheless instructive for expanding the scope of Black intellectual history and hemispheric studies, and for exposing the invisible architecture of white nationalism that continues to structure the self-imaging of the United States in relation to the Americas today. At the same time, though, a serious exploration of Black writers' competing proposals must also grapple with the uncomfortable reality that many of these were severely limited by the colonial epistemologies that shaped

them, either further displacing the burdens of colonization and deracination onto Indigenous nations or betraying an internalization of US-American exceptionalism that manifested as patronizing paternalism toward other people of color throughout the hemisphere. What happens when the liberationist rhetoric and diasporic rhapsodies of Black internationalism collide with actual Afro-descended people who look, think, and live their lives in dramatically different ways from African Americans in the United States is an essential component of this history if these examples are to be useful for imagining new modes of hemispheric and diasporic relationality in the future.

CHAPTER ONE

Self-Fashioning Citizenship in the Colonizationist Renaissance

> The émigrés had wanted to belong to a country of the future. . . . What orphan had not yearned for a mother country or a free territory? What bastard had not desired the family name or, better yet, longed for a new naming of things? Why not dream of a country that might love you in return and in which your skin wasn't a prison? Desire was as reliable as any map when you were searching for the Promised Land or trying to find the path to Utopia or imagining the United States of Africa.
>
> —SAIDIYA HARTMAN, *Lose Your Mother* (2008)

> The Africans they could easily become, they didn't want. They were in Africa, but they were loyal to anything but Africa. "Going native" was opposed from the very beginning. They never fulfilled their goal to redeem Africa because they came to reform and reinvent it, not to become a part of it.
>
> —BENJAMIN AND ANITA DENNIS, *Slaves to Racism* (2008)

The historiography of the colonization movement, which sponsored the deportation of African Americans from the United States to Liberia, consistently frames emigrants becoming settler-colonists in West Africa as a kind of Black corollary to Manifest Destiny. Not only was it "now the manifest destiny of the African American people to return to their ancestral homeland, bringing the benefits of Christianity and civilization," but "Liberia had its own 'manifest destiny' beyond the coastal settlements, in Africa's forests and savanna" where "expansion into the hinterland promised not just prosperity but life itself for the settlers."[1] Colonization depended on US-American imperialist ideology, deploying Black settler-colonists to Liberia as "international 'homesteaders'" who "would serve as proxies for U.S. interests in the American tropics by becoming parallel settler citizens enacting their own versions of manifest destiny."[2] By the mid-nineteenth century, however—general skepticism about colonization among African Americans notwithstanding—a number of African-oriented Black internationalists openly embraced the conceptualization of Liberia as a divinely ordained "civilizing mission." Thus, even though

"the concept of white superiority and a narrow perception of reality underpinned the evolution of Manifest Destiny, which in turn unleashed American expansionism," Tunde Adeleke observes, "the irony is that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was black Americans who staunchly advocated the application and extension of Manifest Destiny to Africa and lamented American isolation from the partitioning of the continent."[3]

Building on conceptualizations of colonization as an extension of US-American imperialism, I contend that the transformation of African Americans into settler-colonists in West Africa represents a racial segregation and cartographical reorientation of Manifest Destiny that is nevertheless wholly consistent with its core ethics (white nationalism, US-American exceptionalism, and Christian millennialism).[4] The relegation of African Americans to Africa, in fact, ostensibly resolves what Amy Kaplan describes as "one of the major contradictions of imperialist expansion": How does a white nation achieve a sprawling empire designed to conquer and "civilize" people of color without compromising its essential whiteness? As the United States aimed "to nationalize and domesticate foreign territories and peoples," the accomplishment of that mission also "threatened to incorporate nonwhite foreign subjects into the republic in a way that was perceived to undermine the nation as a domestic space."[5] To that end, colonizationists "coupled their efforts to physically remove free blacks from the United States with a rhetorical effort to define African Americans as outside of the nation's boundaries" while also affirming the successes of Manifest Destiny's "civilizing mission" in North America.[6] They argued that for generations, kidnapped Africans had been "Americanized" through exposure to Anglo US-American culture and were thereby prepared to "civilize" Indigenous Africans in turn. Moreover, deploying Black emigrants/deportees would accelerate the demographic whitening of the metropole required for the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. Or as one colonizationist novelist, Sarah Josepha Hale, wrote, "Liberia has solved the enigma of the ages. The mission of American slavery is to Christianize Africa."[7] This narrativization of slavery and emancipation qua cultural edification and moral improvement further helped white expansionists to cast the United States as "exceptional, isolated, and anticolonial" in contradistinction to the overseas imperialism of European monarchies, confirming "the perceived 'distance' between the Eastern and Western hemispheres" at a time when, as Gretchen Murphy notes, such a perception "was neither inevitable nor monolithic."[8]

Confoundingly, though, Manifest Destiny also provided a useful framework for Black internationalists, who "contended that slavery, and centuries of association with European civilization and Christianity, had liberated and

set them apart from indigenous Africans" and thereby "conferred legitimacy and recognition upon black Americans as they sought to become partners of the Europeans in the task of civilizing 'primitive' Africa."[9] Scholars have tended to regard white colonization and Black internationalism (Pan-Africanism) with respect to Liberia as wholly separate intellectual phenomena that accidentally converge through an uneasy marriage of convenience: a racially hierarchized assemblage of "proslavery or racially nationalistic whites who managed to dupe some naïve free blacks and antislavery whites into cooperating with them" and "protoblack nationalists who, out of their desire for autonomy, worked tactically and wearily with proslavery whites."[10] As David Kazanjian compellingly illustrates, the supposed distinctness of these traditions results in a historiography that fails to address adequately the dramatic complexities that individual emigrants/deportees experienced in this overlap: "Even the currently vibrant fields of Afro-diasporic studies and settler colonial studies do not give us the terms with which to study, in nineteenth century Liberia, the black settler colonization of slave-trading indigenous Africans."[11] Just as expansionism convened unusual political bedfellows in the United States, interpreting colonization through Manifest Destiny's mythologies lends ideological coherence to the occasional alliances among white abolitionists, Southern enslavers, and Black separatists. As I will show, although articulated from distinct perspectives and with sometimes competing ethical commitments, these deviating discourses on Liberia nevertheless agree on the main plot points, narrating colonization as a kind of biblical parable: the slave ship's hold represents the belly of Jonah's whale, which, after a moral lesson through divine intervention (enslavement), has finally delivered these "chosen" agents to Nineveh (Liberia) to save a "pagan" people (Africans).

Following Kazanjian, I emphasize how Manifest Destiny and the lived experiences of Black emigrants/deportees help establish more nuanced readings of colonization that weave together these divergent frameworks. This chapter focuses on the autobiography of Reverend Daniel Peterson, who traveled to Liberia in 1853 and published his colonizationist account of West Africa as part of a longer personal narrative, *The Looking-Glass* (1854). I use this text as a case study for tracking the instrumentalization of Manifest Destiny's georacial logics in colonizationist discourse because it resists easy generic categorization. On the one hand, Peterson wholeheartedly adopts the rhetoric of institutional colonization, including from both the national American Colonization Society (ACS) and the New York subsidiary (NYCS) that sponsored his voyage.[12] He cooperated with white colonizationists both

before and during his journey, ultimately producing a glowing account of Liberia's successes and encouraging his Black readers to consider emigration. On the other hand, despite initially heeding and amplifying a providential call to "enlighten" the "dark continent," Peterson returned to the United States and remained there to answer a different hail not intended for him: US-American citizenship. "To disidentify," José Esteban Muñoz writes, "is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to 'connect' with the disidentifying subject."[13] Peterson finds just such an opportunity in the material and narrative production of a bootstrap autobiography that chronicles his failed interpellation as an Americo-Liberian agent of US-American empire and his successful interpellation into the bourgeois ideology and political personhood of US-American citizenship. *The Looking-Glass* ultimately exploits colonizationists' employment of Manifest Destiny to assert Peterson's right to and performance of citizenship in a nation that required his removal. By parroting the colonizationist talking point that Americo-Liberians "enjoy five times as much liberty, as ladies and gentlemen in the possession of all the comforts of life, and this in a nation of *their* own" (my emphasis), Peterson disidentifies with US-American citizenship and implicitly claims the United States as his nation.[14] In doing so, he exposes a critical irony within colonizationist discourse: the conceptualization of Black settler-colonists as imperial subjects prepared for their own "civilizing mission" in Africa inadvertently recognized their successful US-Americanization, the very truth white nationalists repudiated to justify their expulsion from the United States.

The Colonizationist Renaissance

Throughout the antebellum period, Black activists and their white allies almost uniformly lambasted colonization, eviscerating its anti-Black ideological underpinnings and its conciliatory position toward Southern enslavers and Northern apologists. Their vehement critiques created a bugbear of antislavery print culture that ironically outsized actual support for colonization.[15] During its heyday in the 1820s, for example, it took the ACS only five years to broker a West African land grab, launching an energetic decade of enrollments and emigrations to a coastal colony poetically named Liberia. But by the mid-1830s, administrative changes in both the ACS and the American Anti-Slavery Society eroded its patronage considerably. Key benefactors like Arthur Tappan, James Birney, and Gerrit Smith withdrew their initial support in response to persuasive arguments like David Walker's *Appeal to*

the Coloured Citizens of the World (1829) and William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization* (1832). As a result, institutional colonization floundered, with enrollments, emigrations, and donations declining so sharply that the ACS was essentially bankrupt within the decade.[16]

In 1847, though, everything changed. Under pressure from the financially struggling ACS, Liberia declared its independence, becoming West Africa's first republic and only the second Black republic in the world (after Haiti). Independence not only resuscitated but augmented the ACS, catalyzing a period of unprecedented fundraising and emigration numbers. Resulting from economic growth after the invasion of Mexico and Liberian independence alleviating the financial burden on the ACS, surging donations fueled a massive wave of sponsored emigrations. In 1851 alone, the ACS raised nearly $100,000 (their largest annual receipts ever), and from 1848 to 1854, it sponsored almost as many emigrants (4,010) as in its first thirty years combined (5,829); in the decade after Liberian independence, the number of emigrants was nearly five times that of the previous decade.[17]

The confluence of several political and cultural factors formed a crucible in which colonizationists could rebrand and reformulate their mission, resulting in what Claude Clegg calls an "emigration renaissance" and what I more pointedly term the "colonizationist renaissance" (naming its more explicit imperialist ethos during this stage).[18] First, Liberian independence fanned hopes among Black critics that the new republic was no longer beholden to the ACS's white paternalism, concerns about which white organizers were especially self-conscious. The *African Repository*, the ACS's official periodical, celebrated "the sight of a young republic springing up on that dark and heathen coast," adding that this development would improve the relationship between the society and Liberia "in the most favorable manner" by enforcing some distance between the two. Independence inspired colonizationists to defend their mission "on new grounds," and they implored members to "redouble their diligence and their liberality in this work."[19] Second, George Harris's fictional expatriation to Africa at the conclusion of Harriet Beecher Stowe's international bestseller *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) recentered Liberia in debates over possible resolutions to slavery. Though colonizationists surprisingly invoked the novel only sparingly, "Uncle Tom mania" nevertheless propelled Liberia once more into the limelight.[20] Third, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the spineless concessions of Northern politicians to enslavers lent credence to colonizationists' claims that emancipation and integration (never mind equality) were abolitionist pipe dreams. Amid the increasingly precarious conditions of Black life within

the United States, colonizationists began to temper the romanticism of earlier decades with solemn pragmatism and even fatalism. The increasingly grim prospects for African Americans in the United States, they argued, made colonizationist realpolitik their only viable option.[21]

Because the invasion of Mexico signaled to expansionists the imminent realization of Manifest Destiny in North America and because high-profile Black intellectuals were increasingly amenable to nation-building efforts outside current US-American borders, colonizationists reasserted Liberia as a vehicle for both missions. The mass deportation of African Americans from the United States could accelerate the "whitening" of the nation-state peacefully (an explicit contrast to the genocidal deracination of Indigenous nations) while also rerouting Black nationalist energy away from the Americas and toward Africa.[22] By combining these two strategies, the colonizationist renaissance drew on the grammar of Manifest Destiny to promote the programmatic redistribution of Black populations and establish an eastbound corollary to the United States' westward trajectory. Its syllogistic argument posited that Africa is to African Americans what North America is to white ("Anglo-Saxon") US-Americans: a continent for nation-building, economic development, evangelization, and cultural regeneration.

One of the most succinct articulations of the idea that moral, religious, and capitalist instruction in the United States transitively equipped Black subjects to "enter upon the work" of Manifest Destiny in Africa comes from Secretary of State Edward Everett's address at the 1853 ACS convention. "At the very moment when the work is ready to commence, the instruments are prepared," he proclaims, adding that after generations of "sharing in the main the blessings and the lights of our common Christian civilization," they have "prov[en] themselves, in the example of the Liberian colony, amply qualified to be the medium of conveying these blessings to the land of their fathers."[23] Revitalizing a popular colonizationist analogy that likened West Africa to seventeenth-century North America, he confronts critics of Liberia's sluggish development with "the first twenty-five or thirty years of the settlement of Jamestown" and poses a hypothetical: What if "any one had gone in 1630 to the more important company of Gov. Winthrop, the great founder of Massachusetts; had tried to excite their feelings against the projected emigration; had told them that England belonged to them as much as it did to their oppressors?"[24] The implied answer, of course, was that the premature cessation of North American colonization would have been catastrophic not only for Winthrop and company, who would have returned to suffer persecution in England, but also for Civilization, which would

have stagnated without the providentially prophesied conquest of that continent.

This analogy serves three significant functions. First, it ameliorates persistent (and justified) concerns over the astounding mortality rates among recently arrived immigrants in Liberia. By invoking the disastrous first winter in Jamestown (in which eighty-five percent of the settler-colonists died within the first six months), Everett contends that mortality rates in Liberia (where twenty-one percent of all settler-colonists died from malaria within their first year) were comparatively modest and therefore overblown.[25] Second, Everett likens seventeenth-century religious refugees from England to antebellum African Americans in the United States. Just as the Puritans escaped intensifying religious oppression in England, African Americans crossed the ocean fleeing racial subjugation—the first ACS ship bearing Black emigrants to West Africa in 1820 was even renamed the *Mayflower of Liberia*, and its passengers authored their own Mayflower Compact.[26] Because, as Kazanjian argues, this analogy risks transforming "numerable members of racially particularized populations" into "abstractly equivalent bearers of, and global agents for, American universality and exemplarity," the third and final function of Everett's comparison deliberately affirms the progressive and globally expanding nature of the "civilizing mission" while nevertheless maintaining strict racial stratification and causality.[27] Winthrop's "more important company" sets in motion the two centuries of political innovation and racial capitalism that would gradually "prepare" African Americans to colonize West Africa, revealing the conditionality of white colonizationists admitting Black subjects into Manifest Destiny's global vision.

Because Manifest Destiny depended on a link between imagined "Anglo-Saxon" supremacy and the spatiotemporal millennialism of the "New World," the deployment of Black agents of US-American Empire in Africa requires a similar georacial logic that must not conflict with the former.[28] The racialist theory of environmental determinism provided a convenient explanation.[29] Although the "Anglo-Saxon" race was supposedly destined to control the entirety of North America (or even the Americas), Everett recognizes that "the white race . . . cannot civilize Africa" because of its "torrid clime":

> Sir, you cannot civilize Africa,—you Caucasian, you proud white man, you all-boasting, all-daring Anglo-Saxon,—you cannot do this work. You have subjugated Europe; the native races of this country are melting before you, as the untimely snows of April beneath a vernal sun; you have possessed yourselves of India; you threaten China and Japan; the

> farthest isles of the Pacific are not distant enough to escape your grasp, or insignificant enough to elude your notice; but this great Central Africa lies at your doors, and defies your power. . . . No, no, Anglo-Saxon, this is no part of your vocation. You may direct the way, you may survey the coast, you may point your finger into the interior; but you must leave it to others to go and abide there. The God of nature, in another branch of his family has chosen out the instruments of this great work—descendants of the torrid clime, children of the burning vertical sun—and fitted them, by centuries of stern discipline, for the most noble work.[30]

This is not a diminishment of "Anglo-Saxon" supremacy, he explains, but rather evidence of it, since their mastery of the "natural order" entailed a recognition that God entrusted them to prepare Black surrogates to undertake the providential labors that exceeded their own environmental capacities. Furthermore, such geographic overreach would not only distract from their "vocation" in North America but would also potentially render the United States too diffuse by expanding its empire too far from the metropole, the risks of which were now painfully apparent after decades of Latin American and Haitian decolonization. The segregation of US-American imperial expansionism provided an elegant solution: although African Americans were the "chosen . . . instruments of this great work" in Africa, they remained subordinate to paternalistic "Anglo-Saxons," who would "direct the way" and "point [their] finger into the interior." Put differently, the newly independent republic of Liberia would never truly be independent from the United States, nor would any of the subsequent nation-states or confederations established by Americo-Liberians as they opened Africa to extractive US-American capitalism.[31]

In sum, Manifest Destiny afforded colonizationists a rhetorical repertoire for incorporating its machinations into the providential portraiture of US-American imperialism and for reframing the deportation of African Americans as a benevolent mobilization of those (forced) migrants as agents of the "civilizing mission."[32] Furthermore, it established a through line between westward expansion and African colonization. If the successful invasion of Mexico seemingly affirmed the inevitability of US-American dominion throughout North America, then its culmination would be authorized by the future achievements of Black settler-colonists in Africa. The establishment of an American-style republic in Liberia, then, represented the next chapter in US-American self-mythologizing—it was not an adaptation of Manifest Destiny; it *was* Manifest Destiny.

The “Civilizing Missions” of Colonization and Pan-Africanism

Because the ACS had long struggled to earn the trust of African Americans—who, Liberian independence notwithstanding, overwhelmingly maintained deep skepticism toward colonization—its messaging in the 1850s opportunistically pivoted toward illustrating convergences between its mission and emergent Black internationalism. As a result, colonizationist publishing became increasingly invested in amplifying the voices of Black colonizationists and early Pan-Africanists. Perhaps surprisingly, this was not a difficult task. As Wilson Moses argues, this overlap stemmed from the reality that antebellum Black internationalism developed in an Anglo-American intellectual, religious, and political context, so “the distinction between colonization and emigration was not as clear as the emigrationists would have liked it to appear.”[33] Although emigrationists viewed US-American racism as an obstacle to individual and collective Black progress within its borders, their conceptualizations of uplift were nevertheless deeply mired in Christian chauvinism and US-American exceptionalism. As such, early Pan-Africanists found the idiom of “chosenness”—central to the “Anglo-Saxonist” ideology undergirding Manifest Destiny—useful for framing their own suffering and oppression, particularly within biblical frameworks. Developing distinctive discourses of Black chosenness not only “solidified their connection to the biblical Israelites and thus confirmed their status as God’s new chosen nation” but also argued that African Americans were similarly charged with a “special destiny to lead the world to holy perfection.”[34] Tellingly, though, the traces of US-American exceptionalism haunted Black chosenness, and many Black exponents of Liberia “were reluctant to contemplate a future severed from the values of Anglo-American civilization.” Their visions, consequently, “tended to equate the progress of African civilization with the spread of the English language and culture along the coast” and eventually into the interior.[35]

Early Pan-Africanism therefore offered novel packaging for white colonizationists to entice prospective emigrants, who could self-fashion and be fashioned anew as chosen agents of empire charged with providential purpose. Such investments were particularly evident in colonizationists’ promotion of the era’s preeminent Pan-Africanist thinker, Alexander Crummell, who arrived in Monrovia as an Episcopal missionary in 1853. Originally from New York, Crummell attended the famous African Free School system (alongside James McCune Smith and Henry Highland Garnet) before studying at Cambridge University and then traveling to Liberia, where

he labored for twenty years promoting Christianity as key to the continent's uplift.[36] At a dedication ceremony for Trinity Church in Monrovia one year after his arrival, for example, Crummell celebrated the Episcopal edifice with an address that encapsulates his Pan-Africanist philosophy, metaphorizing the church's literal cornerstone as the figurative cornerstone of the continent's future. In doing so, he deftly employs Christianity to interweave Manifest Destiny and Pan-Africanism: "Africa's exiled sons . . . are returning to her shores—returning with the institutions of Christianity—to erect its glorious standard—to build temples on heathen ground to the living God; to enlighten the minds of their heathen brethren; and to lay the foundation of a Christian Commonwealth."[37]

Because such thinking routes diasporic uplift discourse through the Christian idioms of a chosen people undertaking an evangelical enterprise and through the political idioms of settler-colonialism qua "civilizing mission," the Pan-Africanism of Crummell and many Americo-Liberian statesmen is unfortunately saddled by Euro-American understandings of racialism and nationalism.[38] It projects an uneasy diasporic solidarity encumbered by a settler-colonial fantasy: African Americans' Enlightenment education and Christianity underwrote their providential mission to "uplift" their "not-yet-civilized" West African counterparts, an undertaking that would affirm their own chosenness and redeem the entire race. Crummell's subsequent commentaries reveal the upsetting implications of viewing the "civilizing mission" in Africa not only as an opportunity for economic, moral, and political uplift but also as a religious obligation:

> To make all this reality, seems the plain duty and the manifest destiny of LIBERIA. This is our work, and we must do it or must die! For when God gives a man or a number of men,—a nation, place, circumstance, opportunity, advantage, and appliance, with "Ample room and verge enough," thereunto added for a great and noble work . . . and they have neither sight to see, nor judgment to gauge, nor brains to understand, nor hardihood of soul to endure and to achieve, nor manly honor to meet their duty and to fulfill their work and mission; then the avenging angel of God stands in the way of such a people, and Jehovah's glittering sword cuts the cumberers down to the ground![39]

Crummell metaphorizes Americo-Liberians as "Jehovah's glittering sword," deployed to West Africa to save the promised land from a people he viewed as ill equipped to take advantage of the millennial moment. Much like Euro-American settler-colonists rationalized violence against the Indigenous

nations of North America who “occupied” lands that God had designated as an arena for their Manifest Destiny, Crummell’s articulation of the “civilizing mission” here authorizes what Adeleke calls a “Machiavellian disposition” in which the African American “*repossession* of their rightful inheritance—Africa” justifies the “cutting” of any “cumberers” that might obstruct that mission, including the Indigenous Africans they were ostensibly called by God to save.[40] And as Crummell’s unambiguous ultimatum “we must do it or must die!” makes clear, the instrumentalization of Americo-Liberians as a divine weapon (“glittering sword”) authorized actual violence against West Africans, as repeatedly seen in their encounters with the nations within and without Liberia’s artificially constructed borders.[41]

The *Isla de Cuba*: A Case Study

Having characterized how both colonization and Pan-Africanism in the 1850s share Manifest Destiny’s grammars of Christianity and Civilization, I turn our attention now to a dense locus where these discourses dialogue and collide: the 1853 voyage of the colonizationist vessel, *Isla de Cuba*. Unlike the much larger ACS vessels launched from southern ports like New Orleans, Baltimore, Norfolk, and Savannah, the NYCS-sponsored *Isla de Cuba* was the only vessel that year that embarked from a northern port and carried exclusively freeborn emigrants—a mere fifty-three passengers, including “three large families, of ages from the infant of months to the venerable grandmother of over fourscore.”[42] The *Isla de Cuba* especially interested white colonizationists because its small cohort of emigrants were free, educated Black men and women who chose Liberia over the United States. As such, their testimonies—which would presumably evince sincere articulations of Pan-Africanist philosophy and the “civilizing mission”—would constitute a valuable resource for proselytizing future emigrants, especially those concerned that Liberia was still an ACS puppet. Consequently, the colonizationist press covered the voyage closely, beginning with a well-circulated roster with the names, ages, relations, and birth statuses (free/enslaved) of its passengers.[43] Because many of these emigrants were prominent members of the Black middle class, the *New-York Colonization Journal* appended to the roster several paragraphs characterizing the emigrants, noting daguerreotypist Augustus Washington’s Dartmouth education, Daniel Peterson’s “highly recommended” preaching, and Stephen Ajon’s responsible provisions for his “large and dependent family”; another report noted that Ajon was a schoolmaster in Newburgh, New York, both Peterson and Samuel Williams were

clergymen, and that Abraham Caldwell "is reputed to have property in this city to the value of $10,000 but having formerly lived in Liberia, he entertains for it a superior attachment."[44] As a collective, the passengers were "superior in organization and promise of usefulness," leading the NYCS to boast "that a more promising addition to the population of Liberia has, in our estimation, never been made."[45] Additionally, a report from the *Journal of Commerce* reprinted in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* boasted that "with a slight exception, all of [the travelers] above the age of eleven years are able to both read and write," concluding enthusiastically that "they will be a valuable acquisition to the colony" (notably anachronistic diction to describe the republic).[46] The Pennsylvania Colonization Society evidently agreed, organizing a party of supporters to wish them bon voyage as the ship set sail.[47]

During and after its voyage, the coverage continued as the *New York Spectator*, *African Repository*, *Journal of Commerce*, and *Virginian Colonizationist* all published letters from its passengers in spring 1854.[48] After the bark returned the following spring, the *Colonization Herald* sustained its hype by publishing "Advices from the Pennsylvania Emigrants by the *Isla de Cuba*" and a "Resolution of Thanks" from the passengers in April. The latter article detailed how the passengers formed a kind of aquatic Black convention as they neared Monrovia, electing officers, drafting resolutions to thank their sponsors, and voting to "present copies of these resolutions to the Captain of the *Isla de Cuba*, the *Liberia Herald*, the *New York Tribune*, and the principal organs of the Colonization Society in America." Furthermore, no fewer than three passengers published books or pamphlets detailing their journeys to Liberia: Daniel Peterson's *The Looking-Glass*; William Nesbit's scathing *Four Months in Liberia* (1855), which rebuked the republic and featured a preface from Martin Delany; and Samuel Williams's lengthy rejoinder to Nesbit's publication, *Four Years in Liberia* (1857).[49] The passengers, in other words, were keenly attuned to white colonizationists' literal and symbolic investments in this particular vessel's success.

Because this expedition was so highly anticipated and well-documented, it constitutes a dense record of how both white colonizationists and Pan-Africanists used Manifest Destiny to frame the ongoing colonization of Liberia. As such, the *Isla de Cuba* exemplifies Paul Gilroy's famous formulation of the ship as a "chronotope" for the circuits of power rooted in and routed through the Black Atlantic, evidencing—quite literally here—one of the "various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland."[50] Significantly though, the *Isla de Cuba* also presents an important opportunity to reconsider Gilroy's work in light of Colin Dayan's critique of its

"strangely magical" abstraction of the Middle Passage into "a metaphor, anchored somewhere in a vanishing history" of its material violence.[51] Even as their (sometimes) voluntary voyages seemingly reversed the Middle Passage both directionally (from North America to West Africa) and symbolically (transporting Black people *away* from slavery and *into* freedom), for example, Black emigrants bound for Liberia were nevertheless haunted by the spectral slave ship like a Derridean trace. I emphasize *sometimes* here and deliberately pun on *bound* (evoking both movement toward a destination and the condition of bondage) to underscore that Black emigration to Liberia was frequently an outgrowth of plantation slavery, with many enslaved people involuntarily deported as conditions of their deceased enslavers' wills testate.[52] Furthermore, three passengers ("two children and one aged man") did not survive the voyage, and twenty-eight more would perish before June 1854 during a period of epidemiological acclimation to Liberia's malaria epidemic, eerily reminiscent of "seasoning"; one report estimated that a third of 277 passengers from the *Banshee*, an ACS vessel that sailed within days of the *Isla de Cuba*, died within a year in Africa.[53]

We need not stretch our imaginations to see traces of the Middle Passage here, and it would strain credulity that such violent ironies were lost on the passengers themselves, who traveled, in every sense of Christina Sharpe's robust phrase, "in the wake" of the slave ship—*wake* as the trail of a ship on the water, *wake* as a ritual of mourning, and *wake* as the transition into a state of consciousness.[54] Even the emigrants aboard the *Isla de Cuba*, who were never enslaved themselves, were at most only a few generations removed from the slave ships that carried their ancestors from Africa and they remained painfully aware of the precariousness of freedom after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Not only were all US-American citizens deputized to abet the recapture of refugees from slavery (including those who had been free for years), but the culture of surveillance, policing, and exploitation it produced facilitated the misidentification and enslavement of free people without legal recourse, as Solomon Northrup famously documents in *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853)—a slave narrative published in Buffalo and Auburn just before the *Isla de Cuba* left New York. Had its passengers read it? Was it the final push they needed to emigrate? Did they know that Liberia was not a haven from human trafficking but was actively combating the African slave trade operating outside its borders? Did they know that their own voyage intersected the routes of the continued transatlantic trade that illegally smuggled captive Africans to the Americas? Were they concerned that their ship had been christened the *Isla de Cuba*, or was the irony that its namesake was

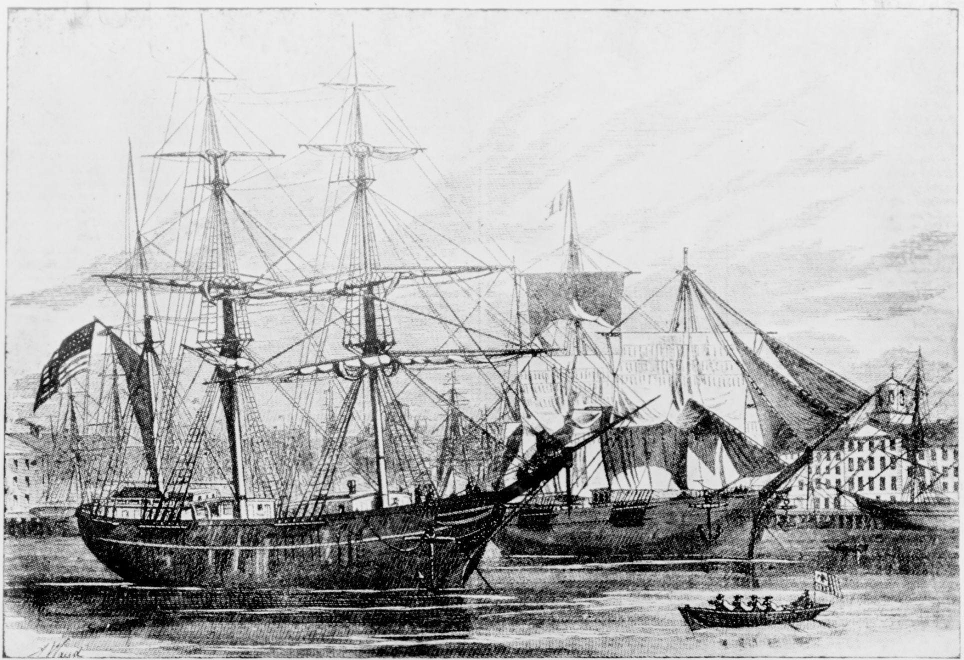


FIGURE 1.1 *Barque "Isla de Cuba."* Frances Boardman Crowninshield Bradlee, *Piracy in the West Indies and Its Suppression* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1923). Courtesy of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

the American conduit for the illegal slave trade lost on them? What they did not know was that five years later, their vessel would be sold and reoutfitted for another voyage from New York to Africa—this time, not to deliver Black emigrants to Liberia but to purchase kidnapped Africans to be sold into slavery (figure 1.1).[55]

Upon finally boarding the ship in New York harbor, Daniel Peterson observed uneasily that "some [passengers] came without any clothing except what they had on, and also without bedding," until the NYCS's corresponding secretary Rev. J. B. Pinney ventured back to shore to retrieve "new beds and clothing for the destitute emigrants, amounting in price to nearly one hundred dollars."[56] What dark analogies entered Peterson's and his unfortunate shipmates' minds while Pinney rowed the perilous mile back to the

docks? How did such impoverished travelers secure passage aboard a ship celebrated for its overwhelmingly middle-class character? Were three of these "poor strangers" stowaways, worried that the spectacle of Pinney's heroics would expose them as the difference between the fifty-three passengers listed on the official manifest and the fifty-six passengers that Peterson tallied on board?[57] Did the indigent passengers' faces betray regret, realizing only now how perhaps fatally underprepared they were for the transatlantic voyage? Or were they attempting to mask their shame when they encountered the impeccably dressed Peterson countenancing them? Did their ragged appearance discomfort their well-dressed counterparts, too nearly recalling the institution they all sought to escape? Did these class divisions give way to solidarity during the thirty-eight days at sea? Did passengers bond over the "little bird" they caught and released after a storm, the sea turtle they "lowered a boat and went after," the gruesome skinning and dressing of a shark that Captain Miller harpooned, or the unusual repast that followed?[58] As they shared stories over the "dry meat," did they wonder why sharks swam so eagerly astride their vessel? Or did they know the grim answer?

With these critical fabulations, I want to make two points before proceeding into my reading of how one of these voyagers—Daniel Peterson—recalled his time in West Africa.[59] First, I want to temper white colonizationists' excitement and Pan-Africanists' romanticism regarding the endgame of emigration by balancing it against the harrowing experiences of *becoming colonial* that many emigrants themselves faced during their passage to and homesteading in a settler-colony.[60] For even the most idealistic emigrant, the decision to leave the United States was a fraught one at best, and as we will see, experiences of African Americans who remained in Liberia varied dramatically based on wealth, education, and social capital with the ruling class. While we cannot know passengers' thoughts aboard the *Isla de Cuba*, highlighting how the Middle Passage's traces indubitably haunt this and similar voyages lays the groundwork for probing the gap between rhetoric and experience.[61] Second, these critical fabulations emphasize that even though Pan-Africanist perspectives were necessarily filtered through the double consciousness of diasporic subjects symbolically reversing the Middle Passage, their operationalization of Manifest Destiny nevertheless begets elements of classism, colorism, and Christian nationalism that were already evident on the *Isla de Cuba* and that would be devastatingly clear as Americo-Liberians tried to govern a diverse colonized population and enforce political borders that the ACS had mapped onto existing Indigenous nations.

Liberia through *The Looking-Glass*

Originally from Baltimore and later from Philadelphia, Rev. Daniel H. Peterson was an esteemed African Methodist Episcopal (AME) preacher and a tailor in the Mohawk Valley of New York in the early 1850s when he began considering emigration to Liberia. He likely learned about the colonization movement from the barrage of propaganda and publications that the NYCS sent to churches throughout the state.[62] Peterson not only found colonization's "civilizing mission" and Christian ethos deeply persuasive, but he quickly came to see himself as "a chosen vessel" for this labor. As he shares in his autobiography, God called him to this work in a dream: "I will send thee far away. Thou shalt bear testimony for my name's sake in distant lands, even among those who know me not, and have not heard the glad tidings of the gospel."[63] As early as March 1853 (seven months before he set sail), Peterson began publicly sharing his convictions that "the best hopes of the African race are centered in the free, independent and Christian nation growing up on the Western shores of Africa."[64] As the NYCS learned of Peterson's ebullient endorsements of Liberia, the *Journal of Commerce* began soliciting funds for Peterson's transatlantic journey "for the purpose of investigation and inquiry."[65] The call for donations was reprinted in the *African Repository*, the *Colonization Herald*, and the *Rochester Democrat*; the *Cleveland Herald* even editorialized: "His report will be looked for with interest by those whose decision depends upon its character."[66]

These calls strongly insinuate a quid pro quo: in exchange for his "look without prejudice upon that infant colony" and its "powerful impact upon his brethren here at home," the NYCS impelled "the friends of the colored man, i.e. colonizationists, in this city" to double or triple the "small donations, amounting in the aggregate to near $100," that Peterson had already received from his neighbors.[67] The content of Peterson's report seemed a foregone conclusion. One colonizationist who interviewed him during his return journey reassured readers that "from him I suppose you will learn what is necessary" about "civilizing Africa."[68] And they did, as Peterson's highly anticipated report was as glowing as expected. He beckoned the "sons and daughters of Ethiopia" in the United States to "embrace our privilege, obtain the lands, dwell thereon, and become a great nation"; in the process, "the heathen will be turned from their idols, and join the true worship."[69] Although not properly a missionary account, *The Looking-Glass* labors to "create communities defined simultaneously by race, religion, and colonial interests" and "usher ordinary African Americans into both a global evangelical

project and a localized endeavor."[70] As an AME reverend, in other words, Peterson was persuaded that the evangelical ethos of Manifest Destiny both authorized and guided African Americans' work in Africa. In fact, *The Looking-Glass* promotes colonizationist ideology so enthusiastically that the few scholars who have examined his narrative regard it as straightforward propaganda.[71]

In detailing his three months in West Africa, Peterson presumes the ethnological eye/I of a travel writer who endeavored "to make *Western* sense of what they saw" and "often believed before their arrival that their presence would uplift the African 'heathen.'"[72] Already enticed by colonizationist arguments about African Americans answering a providential call to propagate Christianity and (white) US-American cultural values into Africa, Peterson found a ready-made framework for "making *Western* sense" of West Africa, where Americo-Liberian leaders were already organizing formerly enslaved African Americans, middle-class settler-colonists, and Indigenous Africans into a moral and socioeconomic hierarchy. Indeed, *The Looking-Glass* reads so easily as colonizationist propaganda because Peterson so willingly embraces the colorist and classist schemas already in place. His account's repetition of "respectable" in reference to Americo-Liberian elites in Monrovia, for example, is especially instructive.[73] He "was offered many respectable houses" to stay in from "kind and respectable people" who "look as respectable as the best colored people in the United States," including the "respectable citizens from every county [who] are doing the business of Government" in the capital.[74] By the 1850s, the Monrovian economic and political leaders were overwhelmingly lighter-skinned people of mixed African and European ancestry, revealing Peterson's understanding of respectability as intimately tied to discourses of whiteness. His approbation of Monrovia's "mulatto elite" betrays his internalization of white supremacist semiotics and the pseudoscientific consensus that "white blood" could elevate the intellectual and moral capacities of Afro-descended people.[75] Correspondingly, this colorism also shades his appraisal of West Africans he encounters outside Monrovia as "the blackest persons that I ever saw."[76] While Peterson's subjective observation may be his truth, it nevertheless regards their darker skin as both constitutive and representative of their supposed underdevelopment in a "land of darkness" governed by "the darkness of ignorance and superstition."[77] Significantly, this conflation of color, class, and civility reifies the premise of African American and Americo-Liberian "superiority" over West Africans espoused by both white colonizationists and Pan-Africanist thinkers like Crummell.

At the same time, though, this conflation also organizes the colonial geography of West Africa, positioning Monrovia as a cosmopolitan hub of Civilization defined against the "undeveloped" regions outside the city. To this end, Peterson juxtaposes the "great many very respectable colored people" in Monrovia against the "wild and uncultivated" people he meets in Gambia, like the "Mahometans" (most likely Muslim Mandingos) who move "half naked" through the towns, "loaded with idols" and "charms about their person" and speaking "more than a hundred tongues or languages among them, so that one part do not understand the rest."[78] Whether his observations regarding the preponderance of languages were intended to mark Africans as the punished architects of Babel in need of Christian humility or as primitives (*tongues*) and provincials (*languages*) in need of linguistic unity (US-American English), he nevertheless avers the urgency of "civilizing" colonialism, and identifies the Protestant Episcopal Church in Gambia as a place where "the various nations, with their varied manners," could be unified through their desire "to hear of the wonderful works of the Lord."[79] His Orientalist descriptions once more adopt the racially inflected metaphor of enlightenment, underscoring the need to "light up this great quarter of the world with religion, the arts and sciences" and redeem Africa from "darkness and heathen principles."[80]

While Peterson's geographical narrative transparently lays the groundwork for Liberian expansionism into the African interior under the auspices of a "civilizing mission," his emphasis on the already successful "civilization" of Americo-Liberians and West Africans in Monrovia narrates the violence of colonizing into the past and out of that future expansionist enterprise. "Liberia would never have been the home of the immigrants, had it not been for a woman," he proclaims, before relaying the history of "Mrs. Newport." This origin story strongly resembles the inaugural episode of Mary Rowlandson's 1682 captivity narrative, with a lone woman single-handedly defending a colonial homestead against an Indigenous population "with hostile intent." However, unlike Rowlandson, who was taken captive, Mrs. Newport continued firing her rifle until "the natives never returned."[81] This is, of course, demonstrably false, but Peterson's importation of the "vanishing Indian" trope to Liberia serves two purposes. First, it affirms the republican character of Monrovia as a civilized capital bereft of any vestigial African elements (including people). In fact, even though Peterson meets a Monrovian merchant who "trades with the natives" and even though the port city was a cosmopolitan commercial hub, he implies that there were no "natives" in Monrovia in order to contrast the civilized city positively against the

uncivilized interior; or if there were, these Africans were unrecognizable as such because they had already been civilized so successfully that they were visually indistinguishable from their Americo-Liberian counterparts.[82] Second, importing the "vanishing Indian" trope to Liberia erases the ongoing violence by which that illusion is maintained. Legislative efforts to police the integration of West Africans into Americo-Liberian society, for example, not only regulated religious and sartorial behaviors (assimilation explains Peterson's inability to recognize the presence of Africans in Monrovia) but also established an apprenticeship program that indentured African youths to Americo-Liberian families, a system for cultural assimilation that many Black critics in the United States problematized as neo-slavery.[83]

Peterson shrewdly avoids any commentary on the controversial apprenticeship program, but *The Looking-Glass* nevertheless supports its underlying ideology in which distinctions between civilized and not-yet-civilized people in Liberia organize the division of labor. Just as colonizationists asserted that Manifest Destiny's success in North America was evidenced through the "preparation" of formerly enslaved African Americans to evangelize in Africa, Peterson suggests a corresponding relationship between Americo-Liberians and West Africans. In what was clearly also an attempt to assuage the concerns of prospective emigrants among his readership, Peterson suggests that the grueling agricultural labor required to transform Liberia into a commercial center for US-American Empire fell to "uncivilized" Africans rather than formerly enslaved African Americans who had already been civilized through generations of such labor in the United States. Indeed, as Benjamin and Anita Dennis note, most Americo-Liberians were "descendants of Southern Free Negroes with some small means and education" who developed a socioeconomic culture patterned faithfully after the affectations of the white Southern culture they associated with refinement.[84] Peterson's appeal to prospective emigrants, then, propagates an enticing fantasy in which formerly enslaved African Americans could become "refined" plantation owners themselves, a fantasy he fittingly limns through an agricultural conceit:

> The only way to redeem Africa is to settle it as soon as possible. Take hold of the land, cultivate it, and in employing the natives, cultivate their minds at the same time that the land is rendered fruitful. Set good examples before them, and treat them well. In that way, we should soon gain both themselves and the land, and should all become one people in manners, habits, and religion. Then we should all become full citizens, and enjoy all the privileges of other nations.

> The minds of the natives and the land are just alike while uncultivated. The lands want ploughing up and sowing down with grain, and the different kinds of herd grass, and it is necessary to cross the breed of their flocks and herds. The minds of the natives must be broken up with the ploughshare of the Gospel, and the seeds of grace, love, and unity must be planted in their minds, and they will bring forth much fruit to the glory of God, and be a blessing to the human family. I see that the Law and Gospel must work together in unity for the improvement of this country; and when brought to bear upon it, they will carry everything before them. Darkness and heathen principles will flee away, and wisdom and light must follow.[85]

The slippage between the physical labor of cultivating the West African soil and moral labor of cultivating the minds of West Africans reveals these two operations to be twin sides of the same coin. Peterson's deft wordplay not only validates colonizationist enthusiasm about his rhetorical abilities but also indexes his embrace of the more violent aspects of Manifest Destiny intimated in Crummell's image of settler-colonists as "Jehovah's glittering sword." Whereas the land becomes an eager agent in its own cultivation—it "*want*[s] ploughing up and sowing down"—he slides into the imperative mood when describing the "cultivation" of the West Africans: "the minds of the natives *must be broken up* with the ploughshare of the Gospel." The sense of duty here underscores the providential charge of this missionary work, while also implying that any African resistance to conversion should be plowed right through—a metaphorical belligerence rendered literal through generations of violent encounters between Americo-Liberians and West Africans.[86] Furthermore, Peterson suggests that only through the cultivation of both "themselves and the land . . . should all become one people in manners, habits, and religion." Much like his implicit push for linguistic unity, his call for cultural homogenization here reassures skeptical readers that this hierarchical arrangement would only be temporary, a necessary probationary period until the settler-colonists could complete their "civilizing mission" and their African subjects would "become full citizens."

Colonizationists were understandably excited about Peterson's published report, widely reprinting a letter in which he described himself as "full satisfied with the appearance of things" in Liberia and reaffirmed his "intention to publish some notice of what I have seen, with my views of the country, its people, &c., in pamphlet form."[87] Peterson also spoke at the annual NYCS meeting upon his return, and while the society's *New-York Colonization Journal*

declined to reproduce his address in full or in part, it did celebrate his decision "to publish a small work on 'What he Saw in Africa.'"[88] Curiously, though, despite Peterson's enthusiastic embrace of colonization, this anticipation marks the full extent of institutional colonization's engagement with *The Looking-Glass*, as neither the NYCS nor the ACS reviewed or advertised the book in its publications.[89] It would be understandable if colonizationists wanted to endorse Peterson's writing selectively by excerpting or summarizing portions, as in the *African Repository*'s later reviews of his shipmate Samuel Williams's *Four Years in Liberia*.[90] It would also be understandable if they were displeased with his observations and rebutted them, as both the *African Repository* and the *New-York Colonization Journal* did in their point-by-point responses to his shipmate William Nesbit's *Four Months in Liberia*.[91] But institutional colonization exercised neither of these options.

So why, then, did the societies that ideologically and financially sponsored Peterson's journey not promote the glowing account he authored? I want to suggest that reading *The Looking-Glass* as straightforward propaganda is too simplistic and instead posit that its material form ultimately reveals a more complicated interpretation of Peterson's situation relative to Manifest Destiny in the United States and Africa; one that potentially frustrated colonizationists. For example, although he promised his benefactors a "small work" in "pamphlet form," what he produced was a surprisingly ornate gift book: a compact duodecimo bound in resilient cloth dyed black, red, or green, with a gilded inlay of intricate latticework on its spine, gold-trimmed pages, and an impressed image of a dove bearing an olive branch, framed by the words "A Land of Rest, Peace and Unity; a Government of Wisdom and Equality" on its cover (figure 1.2).[92] While the final product was a fine material object, it confounded colonizationists' prevailing market concerns: Peterson's production of *The Looking-Glass* as a baroquely bound autobiography squandered any chance for its cost-effective reproduction and distribution among colonizationist circulation networks, however useful its contents may have been.[93]

How could someone so attuned to (and dependent on) the economic forces shaping colonizationist ideology and print culture overlook these practical concerns? While I want to be careful not to project motivations onto Peterson, reading the highly aestheticized material form of *The Looking-Glass* in conjunction with its autobiographical narrative structure enables us to unsettle his relationship to both the colonization movement and Manifest Destiny's transatlantic ambitions. As Kazanjian contends, scholarship on Black settler-colonists has traditionally been governed by overdetermined metanarratives that leave little room for analysis of "Liberia's unsettled lives by

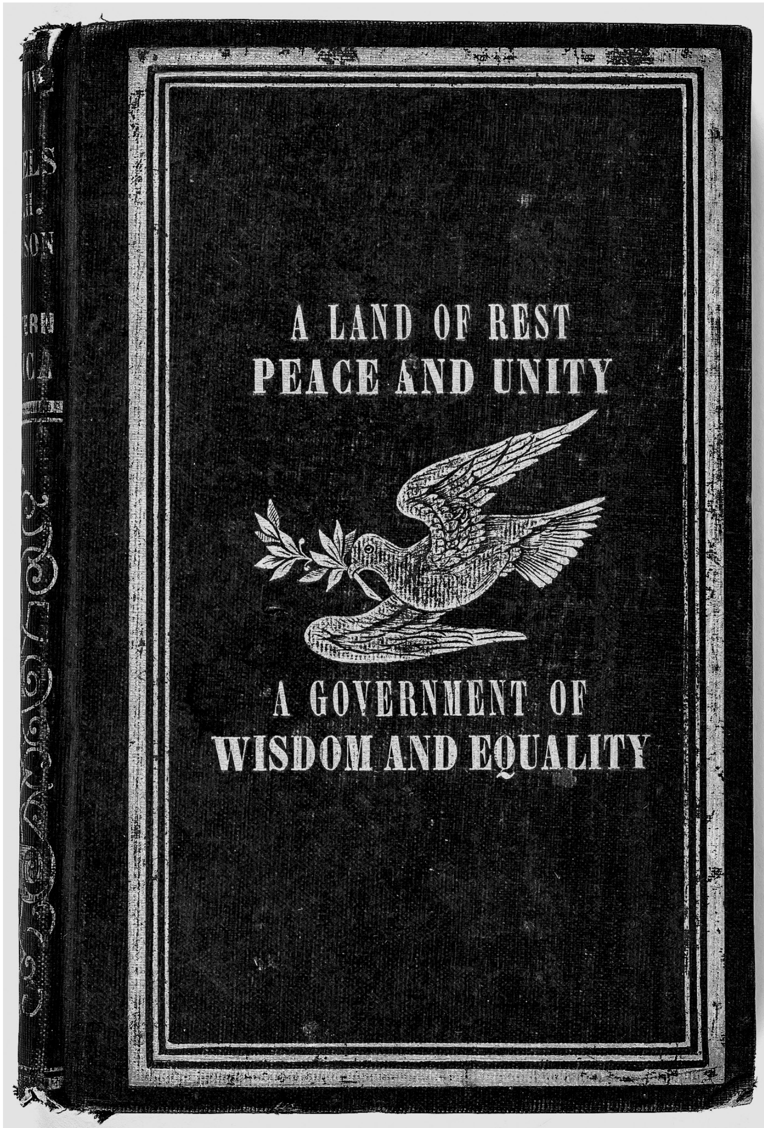


FIGURE 1.2 Cover of Daniel Peterson, *The Looking-Glass*. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

taking for granted the willful autonomy of the settlers and the meaning of the freedom they sought." Although Kazanjian is primarily concerned with a fragile epistolary archive of Americo-Liberians' letters to their former enslavers, autobiographies like *The Looking-Glass* are similarly "public texts rather than glimpses into individuated, private selves," and as such, they similarly negotiate multiple audiences.[94] Much like the well-documented struggles of slave narrative authors to navigate white publishing networks and abolitionist sponsors, Peterson composes *The Looking-Glass* in the messy overlap between the demands of colonizationist print culture and his own efforts at self-fashioning, where "the voice of a self [is] transformed by an autobiographical act into a sharer in the general public discourse."[95] While there are reasons to be skeptical that Peterson's colonizationist convictions were "superficial and fleeting" rather than sincerely held, in either event, *The Looking-Glass* can be read as dogmatic in its articulation of colonizationist ideology and savvy in its exploitation of colonizationist fervor.[96] While its narrative content unequivocally offers the promised "favorable report" and repeatedly spurs Black readers to consider emigration, Peterson's travels in West Africa constitute only part of his memoir, and little more than a single chapter discusses life in Liberia. By comparison, the first three chapters (almost half the publication) detail his childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, including his relocation to New York and his ascension in the AME Church.

The Looking-Glass, then, is not simply a report designed to promote colonization—though it is also that. Instead, it represents a sophisticated autobiographical act in which Peterson narrates his transformation from the child of an enslaved woman in Baltimore into an accomplished preacher and international traveler. Indeed, despite apparently never being enslaved himself, Peterson nevertheless patterns *The Looking-Glass* in the generic mold of the slave narrative that concretized following the successes of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* (1845).[97] According to Erica Ball, the slave narrative formed part of a larger Black literary project dedicated to the production of middle-class citizenship by "narrativizing a uniquely African American interpretation of class mobility: a person garnered dignity, respect, and acclaim not on the basis of his or her origins but rather by success at forms of self-fashioning, at rising in society, and at working on behalf of their people."[98] As we will see, *The Looking-Glass* presents a compelling bootstrap narrative, documenting Peterson's humble origins, hard work, and eventual progression into the Black middle class. Importantly, though, the text is equally indebted to the travel narrative—a genre that helps Peterson mediate his own identity through the dynamics of empire and expansion. The travel

narrative's authorial perspective, Sandra Gunning argues, enables Black writers "to create public identities for themselves" and "to inhabit public personae to which they were normally not granted access," especially since travel writing (and travel itself, for that matter) was overwhelmingly the purview of affluent white people.[99] Beyond further establishing his middle-class credentials through the act of tourism, a key component of the public identity that Peterson creates by patterning *The Looking-Glass* in this fashion is US-American citizenship. After all, because the ethnographic gaze of the travel narrative presumes a home against which exotic cultures are gauged, his authorial persona is aligned with the United States in its appraisals of Africa as Other. But if his promotion of African Americans traveling to Liberia as emissaries of Manifest Destiny's eastbound imperial ambitions allows him to narrate his own subject formation as a Black agent of its "civilizing mission" in West Africa, he declines such an opportunity and instead narrates his subject formation as an imperial citizen *within* the United States rather than *through* any missionary labors in Africa. Combined with his ultimate decision to return to the United States after only three months and remain there until his death, this self-styling enables him to claim citizenship within the United States without accepting colonization's white nationalist mandate to relegate "US-Americanized" Black people to Africa.

By appealing to bourgeois ideals as the hallmarks of US-American citizenship, Peterson contributes to a robust reconceptualization of citizenship among Black activists during this period. As Christopher Bonner observes, free Black people exploited uncertain and shifting legal definitions in the United States to envision "a citizenship defined by an individual's work toward human liberation," not "a person's place in a particular nation"; they hoped these strategies would ultimately yield an "alternative community in which behavior, rather than birth, would define their status."[100] Significantly, this redefinition exposes the contradictions of white nationalism that drove colonization: on the one hand, African Americans needed to be removed from the United States because they could not be successfully assimilated into US-American culture; on the other hand, arguments for deploying African Americans in Africa hinged on the recognition of their successful interpellation into US-American culture.

The Man in the Mirror

As a performance of disidentification with and against colonizationist ideology, *The Looking-Glass* untethered citizenship from whiteness through a

visual narrative of Black subject formation *within* the United States. That *The Looking-Glass* is an effort in self-reflection and self-representation is made plain from its title, which directs our attention to mirrors throughout the text.[101] First, Peterson employs the image when directly addressing his Black readership. In a chapter dedicated to a protracted critique of Philadelphia's Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, he documents how internal "strife and contention" have divided the congregation, including the full text of a scathing circular lamenting that "the Church grows barren and unfruitful, and the members become lukewarm and contentious, causing true members to mourn, while the Church, instead of being a blessing and a comfort, brings forth wrath and malice, and the fruits of bitterness."[102] He narrates the literal collapse of the church ("part of it gave way and fell upon several innocent persons, who were killed") as a sort of divine retribution for its moral collapse ("they began to grow proud, and wanted a more fine and showy edifice in which to worship the Most High"). Peterson implores the congregation (which he thrice condemns for "backsliding") to "examine yourselves well in the Gospel glass, and see if you are what you ought to be."[103] Deeply critical of the church's extensive financial support for three bishops and its refusal to endorse a missionary project in Liberia, Peterson contends that the "Gospel glass" is not only a site to expose the gap between the church's self-projection and its sinful conduct but a tesseract that reveals its past errors and projects its millennial future: "Had we been deeply engaged in sending the Gospel to the heathen and to our afflicted brethren in Africa," he concludes, "you would not have had all those confusions and troubles which now disgrace your Churches."[104] In addition to providing the congregation an opportunity for collective introspection, then, the looking glass here allows Peterson to project himself as a prophet, linking his apocalyptic visions of the earth "ignited by this fire, and the flames ascended to the skies" to his narration of colonization as a millennial means by which "the iniquities of the nations might all be removed, so that this great earth might become a perfect Paradise, a place of happiness and joy, instead of sickness, sorrow, pain, and death."[105]

Furthermore, there are also two physical mirrors in the text. The first belongs to his fellow passenger—renowned daguerreotypist and future Liberian congressman Augustus Washington—who "broke his looking-glass" as the rough seas tumbled the *Isla de Cuba*.[106] The second looking glass appears in Monrovia. Once situated in the capital, Peterson boasts of writing diary entries from "a very pleasant room with six windows, airy, cool, and well carpeted, with a handsome mirror, and other furniture of the best descrip-

tion."[107] These twin references divulge two different stories about Liberia, though perhaps not in the way we might expect. While Peterson gains the capacity for self-reflection as one of the many material accoutrements of being a middle-class African American in Monrovia, by beholding himself in this "handsome mirror," he can only view Liberia with reference to his own self-imaging vis-à-vis respectability: "The people in Liberia look as respectable as the best of the colored people in the United States."[108] While many Americo-Liberians certainly fit Peterson's description, *The Looking-Glass* also refracts and distorts images of those who do not, neglecting any discussion of poor settlers and offering condescending descriptions of West Africans. By contrast, Washington loses his literal capacity for self-reflection when his mirror shatters at sea, but he retains his capacity (as daguerreotypist) to represent the world around him. With eyes outward, Washington reflects that Liberia "is no paradise, no Elysium, no Eldorado. It is the last refuge of the oppressed colored man, and a country that could as easily have been subjected by the whites if they had no other, and were thus compelled to take the same sacrifice of thousands of lives."[109] Such an observation cuts to the core of colonization as an extension of Manifest Destiny: an enterprise that envisioned Black emigrants as sacrificial soldiers whose fatal labors would enable the multidirectional expansion of US-American Empire.

These metaphors and symbols complement the more literal self-imaging throughout *The Looking-Glass*: eight custom woodcuts that visually stage a bootstrap narrative documenting Peterson's transformation into a middle-class gentleman. Apart from one final landscape (*View of the Natives and Scenery in Western Africa*), the illustrations parallel the lopsided allotment of textual content to Peterson's personal story rather than to Liberia's political and economic development: two feature Peterson as a young domestic servant, one features him as an adolescent steward on the Delaware docks, and four feature him as a besuited adult prior to sailing for Africa. Peterson's financial and ideological investments in this pictorial progression cannot be understated, since these woodcuts appear to have been produced specifically for this narrative and likely at his personal expense.[110] Furthermore, as Jasmine Nichole Cobb argues, transatlantic visual culture became a contested site for depictions of Black freedom, "wherein viewers of slaving empires considered pictures of Black freedom, turning to visual culture, explicitly, as a tool for the domestication of free people." Whereas Cobb focuses on Euro-American investments in racist caricatures of "flawed Black domesticity" as a visual strategy for preserving white hegemony, Peterson's woodcuts contest these parodies through a carefully choreographed visual performance

of bourgeois values.[111] Unlike the pictorial archives of slave narratives, which tend to focus on abjection, *The Looking-Glass* depicts an already disciplined Black body adhering to the normative codes of (white) US-American culture (e.g., education, labor, marriage, and religion).[112] In doing so, the visual narrative threaded throughout *The Looking-Glass* challenges the construction of "Black freedom as antithetical to U.S. citizenship," as Peterson stages performances of respectability that reify his US-American citizenship.[113]

To this end, *The Looking-Glass* opens with a familiar image. Its frontispiece (figure 1.3) draws on the plantation romances of slavery apologists, depicting a well-appointed parlor in which a young Peterson stands beside his enslaved mother, his "mistress," and her younger brother. This scene of childhood instruction situates Peterson alongside a white child where he "wanted for nothing" and revels in the fortune of his education. Peterson's erect posture visually echoes the traits the caption assigns him ("obedience, truth, honesty"), and his locked gaze on the teachings of the "Lady" confirms that he was, indeed, "willing at all times to receive good instruction"—unlike his white classmate, who stares distractedly out the window. The scandal of integrated education in this scene is mitigated by Peterson's attire and affect. Not only does his sartorial formality exceed that of his white classmate (without straying into parodic minstrel tropes), but its Euro-American style contrasts with his mother's head wrap. These visual codes differentiate Peterson as a free child from his enslaved mother, a distinction the narrative further stresses. Riffing on the conventional slave narrative opening ("I was born"), *The Looking-Glass* begins "My parents were slaves"; and rather than rehearsing his own family's history, he immediately characterizes his parents' enslavers as "the respectable family of a Mr. Tyler, near connexion of the Hon. John Tyler, late President of the United States."[114] Peterson's narrative builds on this visual and narrative rhetoric to document his assimilation into white culture: "Many colored persons entertain the opinion that all white people are their enemies. That is not true, for I declare that, from a child unto this day, I have found all my best friends among the white people. Therefore, the prejudice which I have mentioned is the child of ignorance, resulting from the want of a clear conception of facts, and sometimes from impropriety of conduct. A great many men bring trouble upon themselves, by their own mismanagement."[115] Clearly intended to ease the concerns of both Black readers (who remained suspicious of white colonizationists) and white readers (fearful of "angry Black men"), this passage bespeaks Peterson's investments in the distinctly US-American ethic of self-reliance as he authors his own successes as the consequences of his industry, piety, and self-discipline. An-

A Lady teaching her little brother and the Author, prior to the latter redeeming his mother, who remains with the lady. The author goes to his new home, carrying with him obedience, truth, honesty, willing at all times to receive good instruction, by which means he was treated as one of the family, and wanted for nothing.

FIGURE 1.3 Frontispiece of Daniel Peterson, *The Looking-Glass*. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

ticipating modern Black conservative talking points regarding personal responsibility, he aligns himself with his "best friends among the white people" to disavow the existence of systemic racism by attributing any "trouble" befalling Black individuals to their "impropriety of conduct" or "*their own* mismanagement" rather than the planned outcomes of a white supremacist society. This emphasis on personal moral responsibility—clearly a performance for the benefit of white readers, including his benefactors—also aimed to reassure Black readers that white people were not "their enemies" and that any manifestations of anti-Black prejudice were similarly the result of an individual's ignorance rather than systemic racism.

As the narrative proceeds, Peterson tells how he "readily agreed to enter an apprenticeship for the redemption of his mother" and thereby successfully purchases her freedom, cementing in his mind the rewards of diligence. As a young man, he leaves the home of his mother's enslavers and travels to Baltimore, where he resides with "respectable and eminent" families who "moved in the highest circles of that city."[116] His ideological investments in bourgeois culture were encouraged by generous white benefactors and reflective of the white incentive structures of respectability. "When I wanted clothing," he boasts, "I had only to call upon the tailor and get a supply, these gentlemen freely paying all my bills." This account is bracketed by images of Peterson "attending in a gentleman's family" and then working "as a steward on the Delaware" (figure 1.4), drawing an upward trajectory of economic mobility enabled by his assiduity ("the cabins were always clean and in good order") and his deference to white people ("due respect paid to the owners and officers; and every attention to all passengers"). Like the frontispiece depicting him as an eager child and the illustration of him attending "a gentleman's family" at dinner, Peterson once more stands erect and well-dressed. On the docks, he occupies the foreground alone, emphasizing his newly gained independence. Contrasted against the multiracial dockworkers in the background, he stands midstride (signifying his mobility), and the basket he carries distinguishes his more elegant service work from their manual labor.[117]

Subsequent images shift from productivity to morality, forming a kind of triptych illustrating Peterson's evolving positions in the church: first as a humble parishioner committing himself to Christianity; then as a groom marrying the poetically named Mary Trusty (eldest daughter of "one of the most respectable colored families in the city of Philadelphia"); then finally as an ordained minister (figure 1.5), who beseeches his congregation to "look in the glass and see yourselves, all in the dark as you are."[118] By using the same metaphor (darkness) for these congregants that he uses for West Africans in

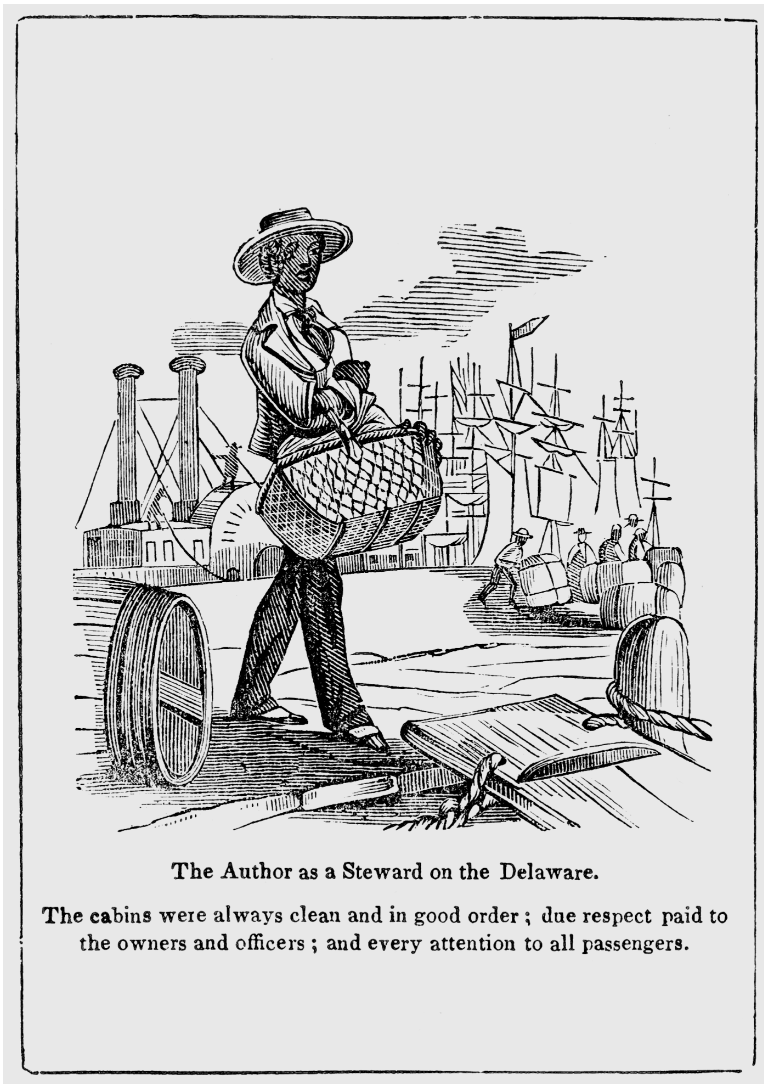


FIGURE 1.4 The author as a steward on the Delaware. Peterson, *The Looking-Glass*. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

need of evangelization, Peterson explicitly links the fates of Afro-descended people on both continents: "The land from whence you came is still in darkness, while here you are daily gaining light and religion; . . . [but] we may be the instruments in the hand of the Lord for redeeming that very land from the darkness of ignorance and superstition . . . from which our forefathers were taken."[119] While the message here provides a familiar Pan-Africanist

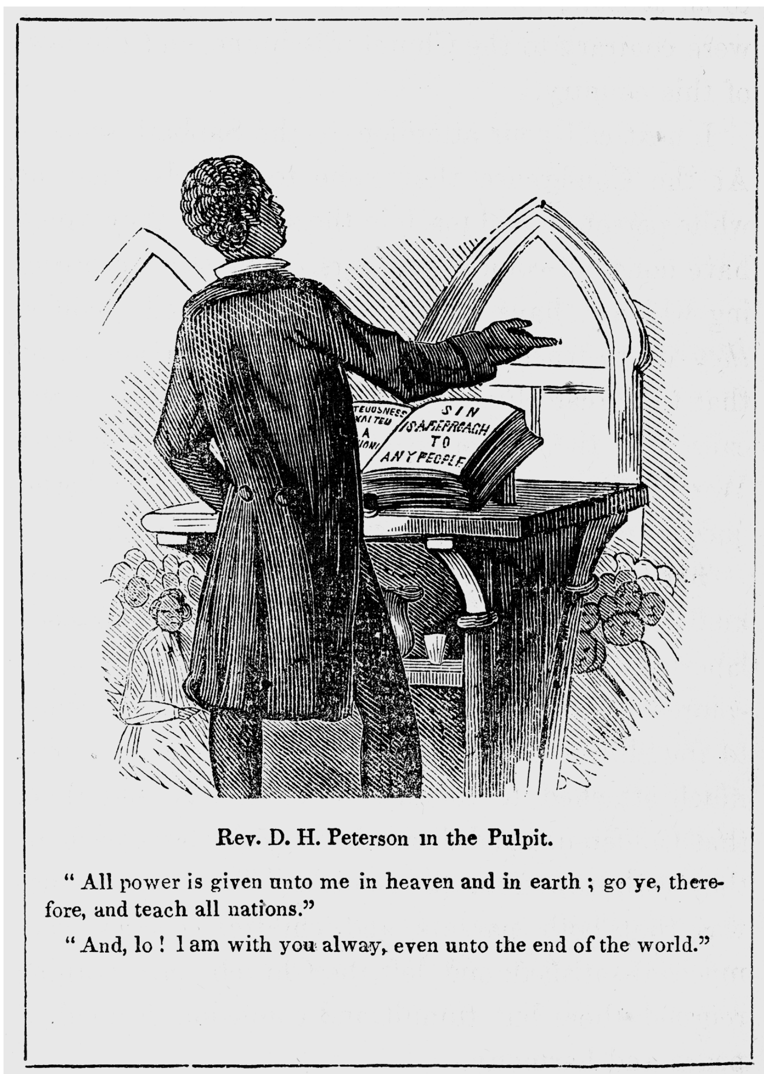


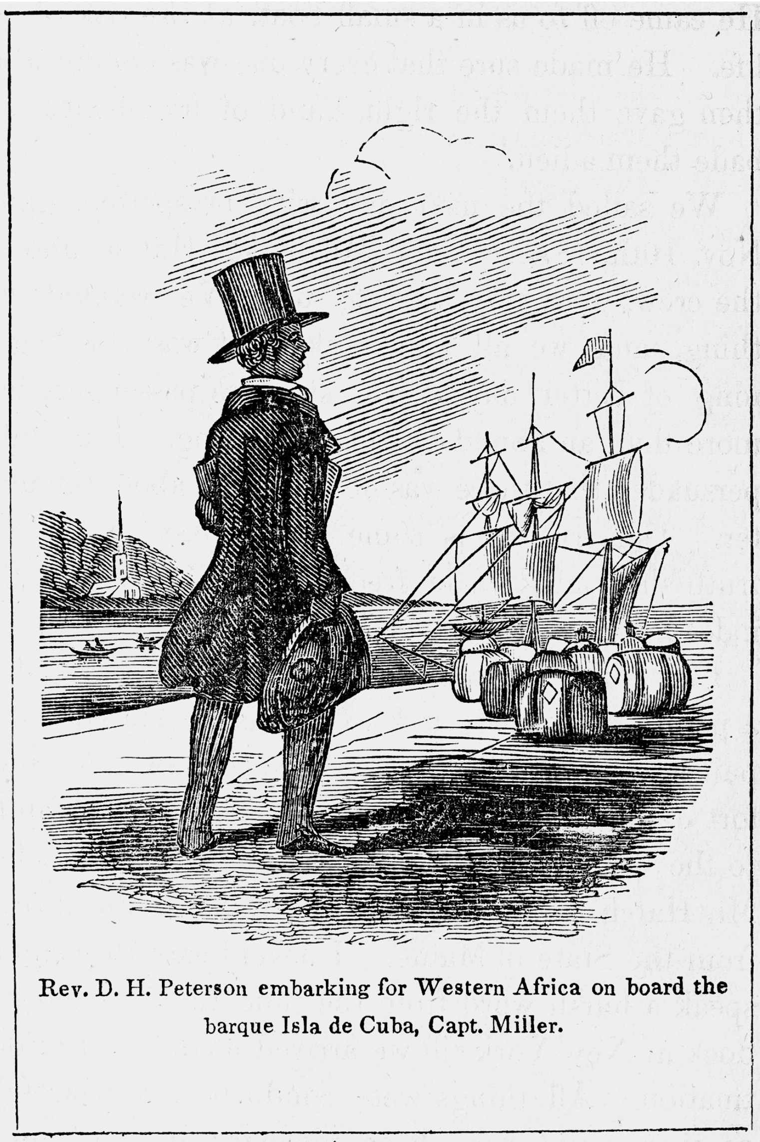
FIGURE 1.5 Rev. D. H. Peterson in the pulpit. Peterson, *The Looking-Glass*. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

packaging of the “civilizing mission” as a diasporic ethical imperative, the illustration of Peterson’s “free body speaking at the lectern” that accompanies this argument indexes its boldness, since even radical abolitionists were hesitant to print such images of Black potency.[120] The accompanying biblical verse (Matthew 28:18–20) further emboldens the image, depicting Peterson as a prophet. Although the scripture quotes the word of Christ here, the captioned image blasphemously invites us to read the verse as the prophesy

of Peterson: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." The providential charge that Peterson communicates is colonization. And while he himself will eventually return from Liberia and remain in the United States, the scripture he recites reassures the congregants whom he implores to take up the "civilizing mission" in Liberia that even from the United States, he will be "with you alway[s], even unto the end of the world."[121]

This distinction between African Americans whose Manifest Destiny lies in Africa (the congregation) and those whose Manifest Destiny lies in the United States (Peterson) is formalized in the text's penultimate woodcut (figure 1.6). Restaging his adolescent occupation as a steward, Peterson appears once more on the docks, this time in New York. Prominently foregrounded and for the first time completely alone, he stands finally independent and self-sufficient. His dapper servant's clothes have evolved into the modish vestments of the bourgeoisie. Dressed in a top hat, long overcoat, and tall boots, he carries a small bag of personal effects in his right hand while the majority of his luggage sits before him at the dock's edge, suggesting someone else (perhaps a young steward like he had been) has carried these bags for him. The symmetries suggest a causal link between this image and its predecessor (figure 1.4). Peterson's diligence in his youth ("the cabins were always clean and in good order") and deference to white elites ("due respect paid to the owners and officers; and every attention to all passengers") propelled him into the Black middle class and effectively transformed him *from* a steward into someone *attended by* stewards.[122] The illustration culminates Peterson's bootstrap narrative, but significantly, he completes this transformation within the United States—underscored visually by the physical space between himself and the *Isla de Cuba* that will carry him to Africa. By concluding his pictorial progress arc here, Peterson conveys his literal and figurative refusal to see himself in Liberia—the voyage is a choice he is enfranchised to make *by* his successful performance of US-American citizenship, not a requisite *for* it.

The Looking-Glass ultimately materializes his bourgeois self-fashioning. With its carefully manicured visuals, baroquely bound physical form, and bootstrap narrative structure, his publication underwrites his claim to US-American citizenship in a manner that subversively precludes his autobiography's easy co-optation by colonizationists. Whereas Manifest Destiny only welcomed African Americans into its mission on the condition of their laboring an ocean apart and remaining subordinate to the US-American metropole, Peterson makes a similar distinction *among* African Americans, claiming for



Rev. D. H. Peterson embarking for Western Africa on board the barque Isla de Cuba, Capt. Miller.

FIGURE 1.6 Rev. D. H. Peterson embarking for Western Africa on board the barque *Isla de Cuba,* Capt. Miller. Peterson, *The Looking-Glass*. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

himself a leadership role rooted in the United States from which he remained nevertheless invested in Africa's fate, which would be realized by formerly enslaved African Americans turned settler-colonists. By distancing himself from slavery and church corruption, he positions himself as more successfully "US-Americanized" than his "colored brethren who are under the yoke of bondage," his "afflicted brethren" in the church, and their "afflicted brethren in Africa."[123] By using his rags-to-riches ascension into bourgeois subjectivity to recruit African Americans as settler-colonists, Peterson aligns himself with colonizationist ideology and the United States. In doing so, he challenges the white nationalist mandate that racially restricts both citizenship and residence in the United States—not by rejecting that ideology, but by writing himself into its exclusive purview.[124] As a result, he exposes the underlying irony contained within the colonizationist framing of Liberia as the conduit for an African Manifest Destiny that conveniently justified the removal of African Americans from the United States. The argument that African Americans were "prepared" to be instrumentalized as imperial agents in Africa depends on a recognition that some African Americans had achieved the standard of Civilization necessary for undertaking a "civilizing mission"; that standard, Peterson demonstrates, is the same as that of US-American citizenship, and through his carefully curated personal narrative, he claims the latter for himself.

Conclusion

For all Peterson's proselytizing about the salubrious climate, "respectable" society, and "great treasures . . . embedded in those lands," he returned from Africa after three months and remained in the United States until he passed away three years later.[125] Although his death makes it impossible to know his long-term intentions, the modest record of his activities after returning intimates that the sexagenarian would not have emigrated. Rather than soliciting additional funds to sponsor the permanent relocation of himself and his family to Liberia, *The Looking-Glass* concludes by enumerating a list of eighty white sponsors and lobbying its readership for money to compose a more substantial "second edition" of the text that would dedicate even more pages to "his labors in this country, subsequently to leaving Bethel Church of Philadelphia," labors he neglected to narrate "owing to the want of time, and the desire of the people to see this report of my visit to Liberia." Upon his death, Peterson bequeathed his property to his surviving wife and children, all of whom also apparently remained in the United States.[126]

Ultimately, then, *The Looking-Glass* indexes the strange marriage of Black internationalist and white colonizationist ideologies, bonded through their mutual investments in the millennial mythologies of Manifest Destiny and its rigid georacial logics. More than simply an emblem of these discourses, though, the refined book advertised Peterson's own refinement, which the autobiographical story contained therein repeatedly affirms through its visual and narrative rhetorics. At the intersection of Pan-Africanism and colonization, Peterson fashions himself as a US-American whose divine calling to the labor of Manifest Destiny assigned him an African mission only briefly before redirecting him to his *real* work: evangelizing African Americans in the United States, some of whom would subsequently evangelize Africans. While such efforts are problematically framed in respectability politics and a condescending view toward Africans and African Americans less fortunate than himself, *The Looking-Glass* nevertheless strategically exposes how the colonizationist renaissance created new economic, moral, and civic opportunities for Black men and women, not only in Africa but also in the United States.

CHAPTER TWO

Ethnology, Empire, and a Central American Communipaw

> Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. . . . I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented.
>
> —HORTENSE J. SPILLERS, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" (1987)

> The negro "with us" is not an actual physical being of flesh and bones and blood, but a hideous monster of the mind. . . . It is a constructive negro—a negro by implication—a John Roe and Richard Doe negro, that haunts with grim presence the precincts of this republic.
>
> —JAMES MCCUNE SMITH, "Nicaragua" (1852)

> In any society built on institutionalized racism, race-mixing doesn't merely challenge the system as unjust, it reveals the system as unsustainable and incoherent.
>
> —TREVOR NOAH, *Born a Crime* (2017)

Although some Black internationalists worked within or alongside colonizationists to advance their own projects, most African Americans remained skeptical of the movement's white nationalist underpinnings and uninspired by the prospect of emigrating their entire family across the ocean. Consequently, Black emigrationists rejected any scheme involving Africa and began to assert African Americans' right to call the Americas home. The announcement for the 1854 National Emigration Convention, for example, explicitly stated that "no person will be admitted to a seat in the Convention who would introduce the subject of emigration to the Eastern Hemisphere."[1] On one level, this circumscription of emigration's scope (the Americas) was a practical maneuver: Because the United States outlawed the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, by midcentury almost all African Americans in the United States were born there and regarded it as their home. Thus, even as emigrationists highlighted how the nation's white political and juridical institutions made abundantly clear that this birth did not and likely would not

confer citizenship rights to Black residents, any practical plan for emigration would need to prioritize proximity to the United States.

At the same time, though, focusing on the Americas was also a principled stance about Black belonging articulated through the georacial logics of Manifest Destiny. Emigrationists exploited the discourses of distinct hemispheres propagated by the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny, in which "the Americas' *cultural* difference from Europe was necessary to justify a policy of political separation, and it provided a crucial expression of the perceived 'distance' between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres."[2] And yet, as Gretchen Murphy shows, this East–West distinction and the proscription of further European colonization in the Americas provided the enabling conditions of US-American imperialism *within* the hemisphere "presumably because of an American political difference that would guarantee the democratic independence that was already somehow essential to the land."[3] In other words, republican expansionism contained within the Western Hemisphere was morally superior to the overseas imperialism of European empires and therefore politically justifiable. For emigrationists, this discourse afforded a narrow aperture to exploit racialist arguments about "temperate" (white) and "tropical" (Black and Brown) races for the purposes of narrating themselves into (rather than out of) that intrahemispheric colonial enterprise.

This strategy of asserting Black belonging in the Americas informed practices that David Luis-Brown calls *hemispheric citizenship*, which allowed Black emigrationists "to turn critical perspectives on U.S. imperialism in Latin America to the political advantage of the oppressed in both regions" and thereby imagine counterhegemonic coalitions and "alternative ruling blocs with the aim of wresting control from the dominant."[4] But where Luis-Brown uses "decolonization" as an organizing principle for the fin de siècle modes of hemispheric citizenship he examines, this ethos is less apropos in antebellum Black internationalism. On the one hand, the National Emigration Convention's pipe dream of founding a Black-led confederation of "colored republics" in Central and South America (plus the Caribbean) explicitly imagined this coalition as a counter to US-American imperialism within the Americas. Drawing on the georacial logic of environmental determinism, convention-goers argued that Black and Brown people were fated to control the tropical regions of the Americas, while their white US-American counterparts would control the northern regions. On the other hand, Black emigrationists disidentified with the discourses of distinct hemispheres and US-American exceptionalism, narrating their own contributions to the de-

velopment of US-American cultural institutions as evidence of their own exceptionalism relative to Latin America and the Caribbean, therefore justifying their own colonial enterprises within the Americas as a Black-led coalition-building project designed to organize American people of color and thereby obviate unbounded US-American imperialism.

One such effort was spearheaded by the convention's keynote speaker, Martin Delany, who contended that Central America would be the most advantageous site for Black emigration within the Americas. While Delany's surprising proposal appears arbitrary and fleeting when compared to more serious Black internationalist efforts involving Canada, Liberia, and Haiti, this chapter shows how he intervenes into a heated transatlantic contest over the narrow isthmuses of Central America—a strategic, burgeoning region for interoceanic commerce and therefore a heated arena for evolving and delicate diplomatic relations between the United States, Great Britain, and the nascent Latin American states. The region also indexed the indeterminate geographical scope of US-American expansionism. As seen in chapter 1, although the most avaricious ambitions of Manifest Destiny were global, the more common debate was whether the United States would conclude its territorial expansion once it secured the Pacific Coast of North America or whether it would eventually expand to encompass the entire Americas. Such questions were complicated by US-American dependence on Central American routes to California—the safest and most efficient passage prior to the transcontinental railroad—and by the United States' uncertainty surrounding whether Latin Americans were racially eligible for incorporation into its white nationalist empire. For Delany and others, the consolidation of Black and Brown populations in Central America would not only stall US-American expansion into Latin America and the Caribbean but also provide the basis for a confederation of "colored republics" that could rival the United States in global political and economic power.

This chapter offers the most explicitly competitive formulations of the race for America, as white US-American expansionists and Black internationalists vied for ideological and political control over the future of Central America. Building on antiimperialist critiques of the National Emigration Convention's proposed (counter)hegemony in the southern Americas, I contend that their arguments for the demographic consolidation of people of color extends beyond a simple appropriation of environmental determinism into the rewriting of an African American mytho-history to emulate and contest the "Anglo-Saxonist" mytho-history undergirding Manifest Destiny.[5] Rather than redeeming or condoning these blatantly colonialist enterprises,

I track how Black emigrationists reappropriate the idioms of duty, destiny, racial essentialism, and US-American exceptionalism to issue a fraught theory for halting the expansion of the United States' white nationalist empire with one of their own.

The second part of this chapter examines another vision for Nicaragua's future and its relation to the Americas: the physician, pharmacist, and essayist James McCune Smith's scathing review of a new ethnography about Nicaragua by white US-American archaeologist-turned-diplomat E. G. Squier. His review of *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal* (1852) transforms Squier's findings into a laboratory for what Britt Rusert calls *fugitive science*, or a praxis "oriented toward ongoing experiments in mapping, movement, and escape."[6] McCune Smith's critical reexamination of Squier's data lays bare the anxieties of whiteness and the constructedness of race that not only poison the scientific conclusions of *Nicaragua* but also authorize the neocolonial paternalism toward and capitalist exploitation of the region that it promotes. More than simply reveling in McCune Smith's satisfying evisceration of Squier's racialist science, however, I argue that his revisions of Squier's data through the prism of his own empirical theories of human diversity and Civilization enable experimentation with a working theory of how multiracial Central American republics might provide a proliferative model for challenging US-American imperialism and the racialist science on which it depends. McCune Smith's authorial persona as a correspondent to *Frederick Douglass' Paper*—Communipaw—provides a cipher for this prospectus. In a letter just weeks after his review of *Nicaragua*, McCune Smith explained his nom de plume by claiming to be a "lineal descendant" of Communipaw, a seventeenth-century Dutch colony located in what is now Jersey City.[7] Made famous in Washington Irving's folk histories, Communipaw was a racially diverse colony antedating the British colonization of New York, and as such, "it symbolized the possibility of human brotherhood" in a "community of blacks, whites, and Indians who successfully fended off white invaders and achieved freedom."[8] More than simply a nostalgic touchstone for a long-lost multiracial utopia, Communipaw marked a foreclosed past that McCune Smith sought to reopen in the present, this time in Nicaragua. By tracing related scientific discourses throughout McCune Smith's broader writings, however, I argue that positioning Nicaragua as an ideal terrain for African Americans to spearhead the reconstruction of that multiracial utopia forms only part of his project. In critiquing Squier, McCune Smith issues his own contributions to ethnology, ecology, and evolution, theories with the capac-

ity not only to rewrite the history and future of Central America but also to unravel the scientific foundations of race itself.

Because McCune Smith's prospectus went unrealized in lieu of nearly two centuries of US-American capitalist extraction and political interference in Latin America, it is tempting to dismiss it as little more than a thought experiment or a rhetorical exercise. Instead, I read it as a radical moment of potential in which he imagines a community that could help to unmake race as we know it—or, perhaps more accurately, reveal it to have always been a fiction. In his scientific writings, he intervenes into discourses of liberalism in an attempt to redeem ideas like progress, modernity, and Civilization by reconceptualizing them from the informed perspectives of their racialized, colonized, exploited, and excluded subjects. His unactuated prospectus contains what Lisa Lowe calls the past conditional "what could have been" of liberal subjectivity and community that centers (rather than assimilates or forgets) the labor conditions and laborers who enable progress, modernity, and Civilization.[9] In particular, he posits that the experiences and epistemologies of Afro-descended people could have produced in Nicaragua—a location poised to become a thriving economic highway—a more just model for shaping the flow of global capital than the imperialist history of US-American hegemony that actually unfolded since, including its culmination in the Central American migration crises unfolding as I write.

Black Imperialism in Central America

As the annexation of Texas, the invasion of Mexico, and the purchase of Oregon established the United States' continental dominion, the nation's increasingly unwieldy geographical expanse became a source of national anxiety, even among avid expansionists. The 1845 essay typically credited with coining "Manifest Destiny," for example, cautioned that the incorporation of California was "not to be predicted with any certainty" because of its distance from East Coast metropoles.[10] Indeed, when miners struck gold in the Sierra Nevada in 1848, California's remoteness became a serious problem for the estimated 100,000 prospectors propelled westward over the next five years: overland routes across North America and aquatic routes around Cape Horn were inefficient and treacherous. Consequently, the Nicaraguan isthmus—among the Americas' narrowest—quickly became the most popular route to and from California. Prospectors who arrived at the eastern seaport of San Juan del Norte could make most of the journey via the San Juan River (the republic's southern border with Costa Rica). After

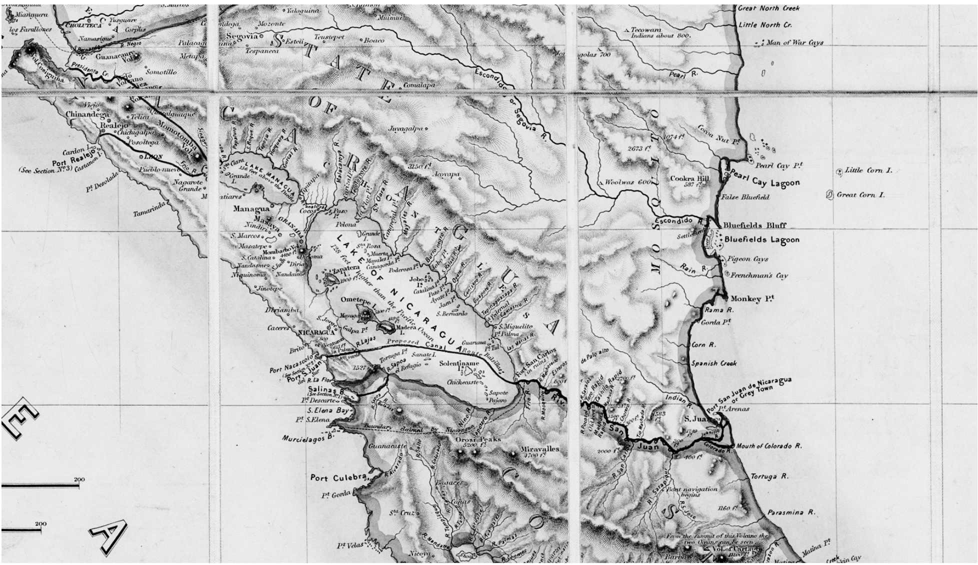


FIGURE 2.1 John Baily, *Map of Central America* (1850). Courtesy of the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, DC.

traveling upstream to its source (Lake Nicaragua), they needed only traverse the massive lake and then take a thirty-six-mile stagecoach ride before arriving at the Pacific port of San Juan del Sur (figure 2.1). By 1855, this route from New York to California was completed consistently in under four weeks, making it the most expeditious and reliable.[11] As such, this increasingly essential intercoastal highway captivated the US-American imperial gaze. Emboldened by its military victories in Mexico, the United States aimed to broker the construction of a canal to expand and accelerate the Nicaragua route. Moreover, if the United States could secure exclusive right-of-way here, not only would it facilitate settling California but it would also revolutionize global trade by enabling direct commerce with Asia.[12]

This energy contextualizes the otherwise surprising emergence of Central America as a prospective site for Black emigration. "At this time adventure was at its height," Delany biographer Frances Rollin writes, and "many colored men, dissatisfied with their unrecognized condition, caught this spirit, and some embarked either for Greytown or San Juan del Norte," which they came to view as "their El Dorado."[13] It was against this backdrop that Delany published perhaps the best known emigrationist tract, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852), in which he singles out Nicaragua for its remarkable economic and political

promise. Hardly a rash reaction to the palpable excitement of an era when "every one seemed to breathe Central America," Delany's resolution stemmed from "more than seventeen years" of meditating on the relationship between "the *colored races*" in the United States and Central America.[14]

His conclusions unfold slowly over several essays on the subject, but they amount to a project startlingly like the "civilizing mission" Pan-Africanists imagined in Liberia. Delany narrates a shared history of dispossession among the Black and Brown populations of the Americas and cites the need for demographic consolidation as a rampart against an expanding empire of whiteness in North America. In his address to the National Emigration Convention, for example, his championing of "the West Indies, Central and South America" as regions for Black colonization hinges on their statuses as "places where the black and colored man comprise, by population, and constitute by necessity of numbers, the *ruling element* of the body politic."[15] Despite the interchangeability of "colored" and "black" during this era, Delany distinguishes between the terms here to differentiate between people of "pure" African descent ("black") and biracial/multiracial people of African descent ("colored"), while also using "colored" as a catchall, like the modern phrase "people of color."[16] This terminological pliability is crucial to the coalition-building Delany imagines. As the United States continued expanding, he recognized how the country would target for interpellation Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic populations whose racial or cultural proximity to whiteness could induce them to embrace anti-Blackness and thereby bolster white supremacy. Instead, Delany hails these populations as "our brethren, or those identified with us in race and what is more, *destiny* on this continent," effectively tying a racial identification with "coloredness" to a political destiny more appealing, sustainable, and welcoming than the white nationalist Manifest Destiny of the United States.[17]

These gestures toward solidarity, however, belie the asymmetries of power contained therein. Much like Pan-Africanists endorsing Liberia's "civilizing mission" relied on a distinction between African Americans and Africans to justify preserving a hierarchy of power and wealth, Delany's investments in US-American exceptionalism become apparent in his vision for what such coalition-building would look like. "Rather than turning to Nicaragua's native peoples for help in developing the government," Robert Levine observes, "he wanted to import African Americans with the education and skills he believed necessary to run a successful state."[18] This proposal indexes the seductions of US-American exceptionalism: Like many other Black intellectuals in the United States, Delany held that US-American cultural and

political institutions were superlative but had been corrupted by racial capitalism. By extension, he also believed that African Americans from the United States could rehabilitate those institutions by divesting them from slavery and whiteness. Responding to critics' accusations that emigrationists supported a total Black evacuation of the United States, the National Emigration Convention adopted Delany's position. They concurred with Black abolitionists that the United States was redeemable and it would be unethical to abandon enslaved people incapable of emigrating. Rather than trying to effectuate change within a racist system, the convention asserted that Black power could be more effectively asserted from outside the United States. To that end, the convention posited that small enclaves of Black organizers would be able to ingratiate themselves to new communities and then "naturally" ascend to leadership positions because of their familiarity with US-American political, cultural, and economic institutions; from here, they could exert more meaningful political pressure on the United States. The proposal was a win–win, they argued. Whereas Central Americans would be rightly skeptical of US-American diplomatic interventions or military invasions, Delany argued, they would welcome Black immigrants as ambassadors of US-American culture who would help "uplift" and "modernize" their societies: "Central and South Americans, are a noble race of people; generous, sociable and tractable—just the people with whom we desire to unite, who are susceptible of progress, improvement and reform of every kind. They now desire all the improvements of North America, but being justly jealous of their rights, they have no confidence in the whites of the United States, and consequently peremptorily refuse to permit an indiscriminate settlement among them of this class of people; but placing every confidence in the black and colored people of North America."[19] Rather than overtly suggesting a Black imposition of US-American institutions, Delany romanticizes this process as more akin to what Fernando Ortiz calls *transculturación*: cultural transformation through multidirectional assemblages and adaptations rather than the colonial dynamics of acculturation and deculturation.[20] Unlike Haiti, where the strong state meant that Black immigrants from the United States would not be easily able to transform existing institutions, Delany reassures prospective emigrants to Nicaragua that "however much the customs of the country may differ, and appear strange to those you have left behind," they could nonetheless "become modified, just in proportion as people from different customs from different parts settle in the same communities together."[21] Formulated both as a sales pitch to Black readers weighing emigration and as an alternative mode of colonialism to forceful

US-American imperialism, Delany fantasizes that Black migration to Central America would inaugurate a long process of *transculturación*, in which African Americans would assume a leading role in an ostensibly democratic process of developing and perfecting the region's institutions.

This process was most easily articulated through the grammar of Manifest Destiny, as seen in James Whitfield's incantation in the lead-up to the convention. It is "the destiny of the negro," he writes, "to develop a higher order of civilization and Christianity than the world has yet seen. I also consider it a part of his 'manifest destiny,' to possess all the tropical regions of this continent, with the adjacent islands."[22] Rather than contesting the georacial logic underpinning Manifest Destiny, Black emigrationists affirmed it, conceding North American dominion to the "Anglo-Saxon" in order to assert their corresponding providential entitlement to Latin America and the Caribbean. Because Manifest Destiny depends not only on mytho-histories of an atavistic "Anglo-Saxon" past but also on more recent fantasies of discovery, conquest, and possession, the convention's assertion of a competitive claim would also require a competitive mytho-history to support Black entitlements in the southern Americas.

Delany dedicates his address at the convention to precisely this purpose: "The Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent" presents "a few facts, upon which we predicate the claims of the black race," which collectively constitute not only a Black Manifest Destiny but also a counterhistory of the Americas. In place of the well-wrought history of European colonization, Delany argues that "the earliest and most numerous class who found their way to the new world, were those of the African race." Furthermore, the African diaspora "finding their way" (a perhaps deliberately ironic understatement of their being kidnapped and trafficked) was no accident, he reasons, since "the continent of America was designed by Providence as a reserved asylum for the various oppressed people of the earth."[23] To the extent that this is a *counter*history, it offers a Black columbiad that writes the African diaspora into a national mythology from which it has been explicitly excluded—that is, it names the criteria for "Anglo-Saxon" claims to their divine favor (they were an "oppressed people" in Europe) and demonstrates how African Americans also meet the bar.[24]

Delany does not simply believe that Black people *share* a claim to continental dominion, though; he believes they have a *better* claim than their white counterparts. "Anglo-Saxons" presented their two-century résumé of colonization, republican innovations, and continental expansion as grounds for their right to hemispheric dominion, but Delany contends that these

unprecedented national achievements, which Anglo-Americans celebrated as manifestations of their "natural" supremacy, actually owed to the knowledge, labor, and perseverance of Black people. He displaces the romantic histories of English colonists transforming "an endless forest" into a thriving agricultural society with not only the fact that enslaved Africans undertook the labor that enabled that transformation but also the fact that "their knowledge of cultivation—an art acquired in their native Africa"—made them "the only skillful cultivators of the soil" in the Americas. Moreover, regarding Central and South America, he highlights the material ingenuity and labor of Black mining practices that "to the astonishment of the natives and surprise of the Europeans" yielded "rich treasures which for a thousand ages lay hidden beneath the earth."[25] This counterhistory recognizes that "colonized peoples created the conditions for liberal humanism," as Lowe argues, "despite the disavowal of these conditions in the European political philosophy on which it is largely based." Manifest Destiny relies on the "formalism of forgetting and affirmation" in which the labors of enslaved and colonized people are essential to and constitutive of a modern political economy, which in turn strategically erases these contributions to justify denying enslaved and colonized people access to the very rights, wealth, and protections their labors have made possible.[26] Delany thereby preserves Manifest Destiny's mytho-historical structure to rewrite the origin of American millennialism with African Americans as the protagonists: it is the Black diaspora in the Americas, not their white counterparts, who are destined to usher humanity into a new era. After all, the purportedly providential apportionment of the New World to "Anglo-Saxons" for realizing their Manifest Destiny had yielded two centuries of plainly transgressive "seizure and appropriation of a great portion of the Western Continent, with all its Islands," stemming from an avaricious global pursuit of "universal subjugation" that did and would entail "so many encroachments of the whites upon the rights of the colored races."[27] The Black claim to the Americas, by contrast, was not only a corrective to the "Anglo-Saxon" corruption of the continent's potential, but also a strategy for halting the proliferation of white imperial subjugation. In fact, Delany presses this claim beyond those of his colleagues like Whitfield, whose vision was limited to the "tropical regions of this continent."[28] If Black emigration to the Caribbean and Latin America eventually produced a confederation of "colored" republics strong enough to stall the southward expansion of US-American Empire, Delany reasoned, then it further evidenced their entitlement "not only to the trop-

ical regions and South temperate zone of this hemisphere, but to the whole Continent, North as well as South."[29]

Significantly, Delany proposed that strategic Black emigration to Central America might forestall or even reverse US-American imperialism just as an intensely passive-aggressive imperial contest between the United States and Great Britain was escalating in Nicaragua. As the desire for expeditious travel and trade between its Atlantic and Pacific coasts became more urgent, the United States became increasingly eager to build diplomatic and commercial relations in Nicaragua, with an eye toward brokering exclusive rights to construct an interoceanic canal there. Committed to protecting their lucrative mahogany trade in Honduras and their relative monopoly in Asian markets through the East India Company, Great Britain sought to obstruct US-American encroachment into Central America and, by extension, Asia. To these ends, in 1844, the British arrogated the language of Indigenous sovereignty rights to recognize the Miskitu nation and establish a protectorate over the Mosquito Kingdom—a fabricated political state that spanned the entire Caribbean coastline of Nicaragua and parts of modern-day Honduras, strategically including San Juan del Norte (which the British dubbed Greytown).[30] This land grab masquerading as anticolonialism ensured the British a seat at any US-American negotiations with Nicaragua but also seemingly violated the Monroe Doctrine, setting the stage for a tense détente between these empires at midcentury. According to Juliet Hooker, the British protectorate also radically shifted local politics, upsetting the dynamics among two different Afro-Indigenous communities in the region: the Miskitu and the Creoles. While the Afro-Indigenous Miskitu culture evolved through the intermarriage of the Tawira and shipwrecked Africans, the Creoles descended from maroon communities that formed after the British abandoned the Mosquito Coast in the late eighteenth century and therefore possessed much stronger associations with African American and British colonial cultures. Consequently, when the British invented the Mosquito Kingdom under the auspices of respecting land rights and political sovereignty of the Miskitu, it was actually the Creoles who "became increasingly socially and politically dominant" because of their existing connections to British culture, leading to the further dispossession of the Miskitu.[31]

Amid this maze of local politics and imperial stratagems, Delany's theory that enclaves of Black immigrants could influence the region by juxtaposing themselves against the exploitative ploys of US-American and British imperialism had genuine potential that unfortunately ceded to a more predictable

dynamic. Although he never journeyed to Central America himself, he did persuade Dr. David Peck, his friend and colleague, to cut his travels to California short and settle in Nicaragua. Soon after arriving, Peck led an extraordinary and successful campaign to elect Delany "mayor of Greytown, civil governor of the Mosquito reservation, and commander-in-chief of the military forces of the province."[32] While it is uncertain how many Black immigrants accompanied Peck or were already present in the region, or how effectively Peck ingratiated himself to the local Creoles, their numbers were substantial enough that "Peck and his friends, and not the Miskito Indians, had made up the bulk of the electorate" that appointed Delany.[33]

What ultimately emerged from this particular emigrationist scheme, then, was not anything as egalitarian as the slow processes of proportional, democratic *transculturación* that Delany imagined but rather a transaction of soft power that ironically epitomized the distinctly US-American political sense of *colonization* that came into use in the antebellum period: "the action of placing political supporters in a district where their votes will be important in an election."[34] Delany's project entails a narration of Black belonging in the Americas that nevertheless displaces and dispossesses many of its other residents. Indeed, his case for African Americans' providential possession of the Americas stems from what Shona Jackson calls "creole indigeneity." By redirecting attention away from white settlers and toward the liminal positionalities of Black settlers in Guyana, Jackson's term names the interdependence of creolization and indigeneity as processes of reinvention through which African Americans produced sociopolitical belonging, processes that nevertheless facilitate the further dispossession of the Americas' Indigenous peoples.[35] Emblematic of these tensions, Delany's counterhistory of the Americas' colonization asserts that many of the "Native Americans" that early European colonists encountered, learned from, and colonized were actually Afro-descended people:

> When the Continent was discovered, there were found in the West Indies and Central America, tribes of the black race, fine looking people, having the usual characteristics of color and hair, identifying them as being originally of the African race; no doubt, being a remnant of the Africans who, with the Carthagenian expedition, were adventitiously cast upon this continent, in their memorable adventure to the "Great Island," after sailing many miles distant to the West of the "Pillars of Hercules"—the present Straits of Gibralter. We would

not be thought to be superstitious, when we say, that in all this we can "see the finger of God."[36]

This narrative overrides the novelty of Europeans "discovering" the Americas—a critical claim for "Anglo-Saxons" invested in the exceptionalism of Western technology and science—by suggesting that African explorers had already discovered the Americas much earlier. At the same time, though, this framing also troublingly accelerates "native displacement and either real or figurative disappearance," underscoring how the "vanishing Indian" trope "serves as the *necessary* or enabling condition of black being in the Caribbean, both epistemological and ontological, and is essential for the constitution of that being through the rise of national consciousness and class consolidation."[37] Ironically, then, even as Delany and the National Emigration Convention imagined forging coalitions with people of color throughout the Americas, in practice, the enterprise nevertheless bore traces of the colonialist discourse of terra nullius and fantasies of US-American exceptionalism that accelerated the continued dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

"An Overhauling of Mr. Squier's Book"

During the month in which Delany wrote his first arguments about Central America in *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny*, he found himself in intimate conversations with his fellow physician James McCune Smith, who was currently reviewing E. G. Squier's revolutionary new ethnography on Nicaragua for *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.[38] McCune Smith was no doubt glad for an interlocutor as he processed the two-volume study's nearly 900 pages. As the rambling title of *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal* (1852) suggests, the work was at once a holistic Humboldtian survey of the republic, propaganda for US-American imperialism, and a companion piece to the more overt racialist science of the American school of ethnology.[39] A rising academic star whose well-received *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (1848) was published under the Smithsonian Institution's imprimatur, Squier was nevertheless unable to secure funding for subsequent fieldwork. When he learned of an open diplomatic post in Guatemala, however, he began petitioning his many influential Whig contacts to be considered for the appointment, which would provide financial backing and governmental protections for him to conduct fieldwork supporting his nascent theories about cultural exchange between the Indigenous

peoples of the Yucatán Peninsula and the Mississippi Valley.[40] After securing an impressive dossier of recommendations from scientists, Whig politicians, and even Washington Irving, Squier won a diplomatic post in April 1849—not to Guatemala under scientific auspices, but to Nicaragua under explicitly political ones. His assignment was to negotiate a treaty authorizing the United States to construct an interoceanic canal with exclusive right-of-way across the isthmus—all without committing the United States to economic or military protections for Nicaragua that might exacerbate tensions with Great Britain.[41]

Unusual, but not unprecedented, the appointment of an ethnologist prompted some concern in the scientific community, eloquently characterized by Squier's friend and colleague Francis Parkman: "I am led to presume that Uncle Sam has burdened your shoulders with a greater load than you had bargained for:—that you will carry it through in safety, I do not doubt. . . . Only don't let Politics swallow up science. They will pull together well enough and make a strong team—one however, which will require a hand as strong as yours to manage it."[42] These apprehensions about Squier's instrumentalization of science as a tool for imperialism were well warranted. As Robert Lawrence Gunn observes, the most lasting impact of Squier's pioneering methods has been their transformation of ethnology into "a uniquely totalizing discipline of human knowledge that matched the aspirations of American empire."[43]

While Squier's hitching together of politics and science in *Nicaragua* is plain from even the title of the work, McCune Smith's review of the book critically analyzes how the yoke that binds them—to strain Parkman's metaphor—is race. "Scientifically educated, up to date on ethnology, . . . [and] fully capable of using statistics and citing anatomy in his own right," thanks to his extensive reading in medical and scientific literature, McCune Smith brought this expertise to bear on *Nicaragua* in a two-part review that meticulously unveils its anti-Black biases and scientific inconsistencies.[44] But even as historian Bruce Dain praises the review as "the most concentrated, astute antiracist statement of the entire antebellum era," he questions why McCune Smith directed such an impressive, illuminating rebuttal at Squier ("a minor member of the American School") rather than at one of the preeminent figures of scientific racism, like Samuel Morton, Louis Agassiz, or Josiah Nott.[45] Indeed, he faced no shortage of pseudoscientific texts that would allow him to expose how ethnologists sacrificed methodological rigor and the sincere pursuit of knowledge on the altar of white supremacy. McCune Smith's flagging of *Nicaragua* as a contribution to racialist science should not be taken for granted, though, as its self-styling as a holistic study renders it

seemingly less invested in racialism than the writings of Squier's ethnological contemporaries. What his review exposes, however, is that Squier nevertheless contributes directly to ethnological debates, especially Nott's early theories of "hybridity," which attributed "whatever improvement exists" among populations of color to the augmenting effects of "white blood," and warned that the positive effects of interracial reproduction on people of color were limited and outweighed by the risks of "Anglo-Saxon" deterioration.[46] The science of "hybridity" was especially interesting to Squier, whose travels thrust his genuine admiration for Indigenous cultures and his unambiguous anti-Black racism into tension with his fervent support for US-American intervention in Nicaragua with the promised interoceanic canal. But if Nicaragua became the promised commercial conduit for US-American globalization, then opportunities for enrichment would necessarily catalyze large-scale white immigration to Nicaragua and, consequently, white men's sexual liaisons with local women of color, whom Squier limns as exotic *mestiza* seductresses. For many of his contemporaries, interracial fraternization and intermarriage proved thorny for Manifest Destiny's expansionist ambitions. What would happen when the incorporation of foreign populations of color into the United States involved not only cultural, linguistic, and social assimilation, but also sexual assimilation? How durable was "whiteness" and how essential was the putative purity of the "Anglo-Saxon" race to the georacial logics undergirding the whole enterprise? As Reginald Horsman observes, "The majority thought that a vigorous commercial penetration of the globe would create immense wealth while allowing the Anglo-Saxons to outbreed and replace a variety of other races." But while "it was generally agreed that the blacks could be improved only by an admixture of white blood," the use of eugenic sexual colonization as a mode of executing the "civilizing" expansionism of Manifest Destiny remained "clearly unthinkable" due to intransient social mores and concerns about the degradation of the "Anglo-Saxon" race in the process.[47] In a remarkable departure from this consensus, Squier uses *Nicaragua* to argue that interracial sexual relations actually provided a means of improving "races of lesser vitality" over generations and thereby accelerating the effectuation of Manifest Destiny's geopolitical goal of hemispheric dominion.[48] In a revealing passage from his study's prefatory remarks, Squier contends that once the interoceanic canal in Nicaragua was completed, it would "gird the world as with a hoop, to pass a current of American Republicanism, vivifying dead nations and emancipating mankind, over the continents of the earth."[49] Beyond alluding to the flow of water and wealth through the canal, "current" also refers to an electrical

shock from the defibrillator of US-American neocolonialism on the "dead nations" of Central America. But in what sense could Nicaragua—a republic less than two decades from its independence and purportedly poised for a significant role in the global economy ("No country," he writes, "could be more favorably suited for commerce")—be counted among the undifferentiated "dead nations" situated "between the States of Mexico and the disrupted Republic of Colombia"?[50] One answer lies in *Nicaragua*'s support for a kind of proto-eugenic colonization through which "lesser" races would be "absorbed" into "stronger" races. Over a few generations of cultural, political, and sexual exposure to "Anglo-Saxon" superiority through US-American neocolonialism in the region, Squier argued, the agents of Manifest Destiny would culturally and racially "whiten" Central America.

Squier's aberrant views on interracial sex and his proto-eugenicist theory that I will uneasily term "racial absorption" explain the allure of *Nicaragua*'s racialist thinking to McCune Smith. McCune Smith opens his "overhauling of Mr. Squier's book" with a critique of *Nicaragua*'s most flagrant contradiction: Squier's overt anti-Blackness ("nasty negro hate" and the "seven-fold gaze of prejudice") and the overwhelming evidence of his "having been smitten in Nicaragua by damsels of each several race."[51] Squier observes, for instance, that "very many of the women have, however, an infusion of other families and races, . . . in every degree of intermixture," only to conclude that "as tastes differ, so may opinions as to whether the tinge of brown . . . is not a more real beauty than that of the fair and more languid señora, whose white and almost transparent skin bespeaks a purer ancestry."[52] Throughout *Nicaragua*, however, Squier tends to pair these effusive, salacious portraits of multiracial men and women with abrupt qualifications, as when he admits that "there are probably no handsomer men in the world than some of the sambos or offspring of Indian and negro parents," only to immediately mitigate that claim.[53] These near disavowals captivate McCune Smith, who quotes the attenuating passage in full while adding his own sardonic parenthetical commentary: "It should however be observed that the negroes of Nicaragua differ very widely in appearance from those of the United States. They must have been derived from an entirely different portion of the African continent. They have, in general, aquiline noses, small mouths, and thin lips—in fact, with the exception of the crisp hair (shade of Sir Piercy Shafton! what a pleasant euphemism for 'wooley headed!') and dark skin, they have few of the features which, with us, are regarded as peculiar and universal in the negro race."[54] Squier's explanatory distinction between the handsome men of African descent and their

implicitly unattractive counterparts in the United States is a convoluted petitio principii. Because the physical repulsiveness of African Americans in the United States is a foregone conclusion for Squier, he cannot reason that these same features are enticing in a colonial context. Instead, he displaces the phenotypes of Blackness familiar to his US-American readers onto a "different portion" of Africa than the portion from which the ancestors of the Afro-Nicaraguans he encounters originate—a "whiter" and therefore more appealing portion of the continent. Put simply, because whiteness and beauty are presumed to be coextensive and because Blackness and beauty are presumed to be mutually exclusive, Squier's attractions to Afro-Nicaraguans can *only* be explained through a clearly improvised theory about African diversity. Unable to resist editorializing, McCune Smith names the strained circumlocution of Blackness explicitly, interjecting that "crisp hair" is a "pleasant euphemism for 'wooley headed'" that whitewashes the West African features so discomforting to Squier. Rather than interrogate the prejudices that contour Euro-American standards of beauty or his own attractions, Squier finally cuts to his conclusion with the Occam's razor of racism: "They *must have* been" (my emphasis) from elsewhere because any other explanation would challenge the understandings of West Africa and Blackness fundamental to white supremacy.[55]

In this early passage, McCune Smith exposes *Nicaragua*'s celebrated holistic methods as not science at all but rather what Karen and Barbara Fields term *racecraft*. A pervasive belief system that "occupies a middle ground between science and superstition," racecraft names the self-obscuring dissimulation by which racism reifies the ontological realness of "race" on which it existentially depends.[56] More than simply revealing the insidious impact of white supremacy on Squier's methodologies, McCune Smith's granular analysis models a praxis of close reading designed to untether the magician's rope linking Squier's data (qualitative descriptions and quantitative demographics) to his white supremacist, proto-eugenicist conclusions (only white immigration and US-American paternalism can redeem Nicaragua). Much like Enlightenment science dispelled early modern Christian beliefs in witchcraft, he applies the methods of fugitive science to dispel the bioracism of *Nicaragua*. Unable to challenge the book's empirical findings without fieldwork of his own, McCune Smith instead shows how anti-Blackness colors Squier's interpretations of that data. Liberating these findings from the simulated a priori causality of racecraft, McCune Smith pursues a radical reinterpretation of these findings that eventually bulwarks his conceptualization of a Central American Communipaw.

To begin exposing *Nicaragua* as racecraft, McCune Smith shows that Squier's concerted distinction between African Americans in Nicaragua and the United States is as much about his specious scientific credentials as it is his flawed methods.[57] He lambasts Squier's "miraculous ignorance of the ethnography of Africa" and the extraordinary extent to which "filthy American prejudice" mars his analysis: "Mr. Squier professes to be an Ethnographist. He is a member of the New York Ethnological Society; he should know, therefore, that the Joloffs [Wolofs], on the Guinea coast, are just such looking negroes as those of Nicaragua; that throughout that coast travelers are struck with the European features of the natives; that just such looking negroes abound in the United States."[58] Significantly, McCune Smith is correct: tens of thousands of captive Wolofs from Senegambia were trafficked through Cartagena, New Spain (including modern Nicaragua), and North America in the centuries preceding Squier's diplomatic deployment. Thus, not only were the Wolofs on the Guinea Coast "just such looking negroes as those of Nicaragua," but it was also true that "just such looking negroes abound in the United States."[59]

By highlighting this moment where empirical evidence collides with the georacial logic of *Nicaragua*, McCune Smith tugs a thread with the capacity to unravel the entire tapestry of US-American racial epistemology. The fallacy of Squier's explanation that physical differences between African Americans in Nicaragua and those in the United States owe to their distinct geographical origins in Africa exposes a gap between observation and essence precisely where racialist science and race itself deny the existence of one. Instead, his observations reveal race to be what Fields and Fields call a "sleight of hand"—an effort to obscure the fault lines between his empirical evidence and his racist presuppositions. McCune Smith exposes the magic trick as such:

> The *negro* "with us" is not an actual physical being of flesh and bones and blood, but a hideous monster of the mind, ugly beyond all physical portraying, so utterly and ineffably monstrous as to frighten reason from its throne. . . . No sir! It is a constructive negro—a negro by implication—a John Roe and Richard Doe negro, that haunts with grim presence the precincts of this republic. . . . The moment an actual negro makes himself manifest by word or blow, he is no longer a negro, he is half white, or he's anything but a negro.[60]

The bastardization of scientific methods and standards of evidence necessary to *naturalize* the idea of Blackness produce "a hideous monster of the

mind," unmoored from the "flesh and bones and blood" of actual people. The language of monstrosity here anticipates Frantz Fanon's famous contention that "the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man."[61] For Fanon, the "fact" of Blackness relies on an ontology of race in which the white gaze projects its anxieties onto the African (American), manifesting Blackness as a visual signifier and fetish for that fear. As McCune Smith shows, this ontology is so unassailable within the Euro-American worldview that when Squier encounters Afro-descended people who do not immediately frighten him, he improvises an ethnological theory of distinct African origins to square his attractions to Afro-Nicaraguans with his disgust toward African Americans in the United States. What McCune Smith ultimately identifies in Squier's bad science, then, is a white anxiety that not only pervades *Nicaragua* but indexes a systemic ailment that he diagnoses in ethnology as a field of knowledge production—a field that was becoming an increasingly recursive disciplinary apparatus of white supremacy rather than an empirical science.

As a physician and pharmacist himself, though, McCune Smith believed that science could be redeemed through methods and interpretations invested in acquiring new knowledge rather than preserving and entrenching the racist status quo. By recuperating a diasporic interpretation of the narrative portions of *Nicaragua*, for example, McCune Smith arrives at two key queries that drive his subsequent demographic analysis: If Squier's prejudices infect his qualitative data, how did they affect his quantitative data? And if they did, how might a Black reinterpretation of that data lead to something other than Squier's depiction of Nicaragua as a "dead nation" in need of revitalization through white immigration and sexual colonization? Pursuing these questions, his critique of Squier proceeds with an analysis of *Nicaragua*'s census. As an imagined site of unquestionable objectivity, quantitative data was an urgent site of intervention, as McCune Smith well knew.[62] Squier documents this data in an easily digestible chart (table 2.1).

On the surface, the table's simplicity implicitly affirms the possibility of culturally and racially "whitening" Nicaragua, as Squier proposes. If "mixed" populations (fifty-two percent) could be absorbed into white immigrant populations and "Indians" (thirty-two percent) inevitably "vanish[ed]," then the "Negroes" would eventually constitute a small (six percent) laboring underclass. Tellingly, though, while the narrative portions of *Nicaragua* routinely use regional racial terminologies—including names of Indigenous nations and gradations of mestizos, mulatos, zambos, and negros—this quantitative data abandons that more complex catalog in favor of a more

TABLE 2.1 Estimated population of Nicaragua (1846 census)

Whites	25,000
Negroes	15,000
Indians	80,000
Mixed	130,000
Total	250,000

Source: Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1:33.

reductive US-American racial ontology.[63] While the question of audience partially explains the expediency of translating local monikers into terms more familiar to US-American readers, this quantitative summary performs a colonialist consolidation in service of Squier's imperial machinations. The translation of local vocabularies and understandings of race into "Black/White/Indigenous" is not strictly a practical simplification for ease of reading. Rather, it violently imposes a US-American ontology of race that translates these terms into the lowest common denominator of a "natural" racial order, eschewing an opportunity to highlight how racial distinctions are multivalent, slippery, and regionally variable social constructions.

Rightly skeptical, McCune Smith scrutinizes these numbers in the context of *Nicaragua*'s narrativization of race—or, put differently, qualitative data. More than 200 pages after he prints the census table, for example, Squier admits that data collection was far less reliable than the numbers imply. Not only was it "difficult to form a correct estimate of the population," but racial self-reporting was adulterated by the socioeconomic incentives of passing: "An infusion of Indian blood is easily to be detected in a large proportion of those who claim to be of a pure Spanish descent," Squier professes, adding, "It displays itself less in the color of the skin than in a certain quickness of the eye, which is a much more expressive feature in those crossed with Indians than in either of the original stocks."[64] On the one hand, this claim attempts to reify the "realness" of race. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue, the view that race *objectively* exists depends on a "crucial and non-reducible *visual dimension*" through which "corporeal distinctions . . . become essentialized."[65] As an ethnologist, Squier avers his expertise at discerning individuals' racial ancestry. Once skin color is revealed to be an unreliable marker of a person's "true" racial identity, he contends, the eyes become the locus of race. While the untrained eye of a census-taker might

be fooled by a mestizo passing as a white criollo, Squier contends that a trained ethnologist like himself can "easily" penetrate such a facade. On the other hand, the capacity of mestizos to pass for white strengthened Squier's arguments about the eugenic possibilities of sexual colonization: they were already so white that they successfully presented themselves as such to anyone except ethnological experts. This phenomenon indicated that white "absorption" was already underway, affirming the racialist theories undergirding Squier's political investments in US-American interventionism.

For McCune Smith, however, the discrepancies between these qualitative and quantitative demographics communicated something entirely different, particularly in places where Squier attempts to sanitize the messiness of biracialism and multiracialism. As the son of an enslaved Black woman and her white enslaver, he was intimately familiar with the social, cultural, and legal dynamics of hypodescent and blood quantum. Whereas Squier attempts to bury his allusion to white-presenting mestizos much later in his study, McCune Smith considers this detail alongside the census data:

> The population consists of Whites, 25,000; Negroes, 15,000; Indians, 80,000; mix of all three above, 130,000; total, 250,000. . . . And of the 25,000 whites, Mr. Squire [*sic*] says: "An infusion of Indian blood (? negro too) is easily detected in a large portion of those who claim to be of pure Spanish descent. It displays itself in the color of the skin, &c." Hence truth might say, Whites, 10,000; Negroes, 15,000; Indians, 80,000; mixed, 145,000; or, if we take the American view of the question (North American of course), and put down figures in the order of majority, we have, Colored or Negroes, 160,000; Indians, 80,000; Whites (so called), 10,000.[66]

This revisionist arithmetic unveils the complex racial calculus subtending Squier's analysis. Although whiteness in "the [US-]American view of the question" necessitates "purity," Squier abandons such pretensions to advance his argument about white "absorption." This opening allows McCune Smith to unsettle the ontological realness of race (especially whiteness) on which white supremacy depends. Overidentifying with the intransigent ideologies of racial purity that governed his own life and taking seriously Squier's assertion that "a large portion" of Nicaraguans classified as white were actually biracial, McCune Smith reassigns three-fifths of the white population (hardly an arbitrary fraction for a Black man in the United States) to the "Mixed" category. Whereas Squier's rendering suggests that the white "absorption" of other races

indexed trending toward a white body politic, McCune Smith consolidates Black and multiracial populations under the umbrella of "Colored or Negroes," a group now comprising sixty-four percent of Nicaragua's population. Adding this new constituency (160,000) to the Indigenous population (80,000), McCune Smith concludes that ninety-six percent of Nicaraguans are people of color. He even casts doubt on the whiteness ("so called," he chides) of the remaining four percent, implying that the US-American questions about Hispanic whiteness emerging from the invasion of Mexico would necessarily impugn claims to whiteness among Hispanic criollos in Nicaragua.

By drawing on his own racialized subjectivity and scientific acumen, McCune Smith eviscerates Squier's case for whitening Nicaragua through US-American immigration, but his demographic analysis also leads to a bold new conclusion: "Nicaragua is a *colored republic*!"[67] But what did such an assertion mean for Nicaragua, or for African Americans (whether in the United States or Central America)? Primarily, this radical reinterpretation of *Nicaragua*'s data debunked Squier's call for paternalistic intervention to US-Americanize and "whiten" Central America before the British violated the Monroe Doctrine and compromised the United States' providentially promised hemispheric dominion. Furthermore, McCune Smith subversively reframes the imperial contest between the United States and Great Britain as a critical bolstering of two autonomous "colored" states: "The British Government claims protection over the mouth of the San Juan for its ally, the colored King of the Musquitos. The American Government claims protection over the rest of the route for their allies, the colored republic of Nicaragua."[68] More ironic than naive, McCune Smith positions these Central American states as *allies* with their North Atlantic counterparts, rescripting their paternalist neocolonialism as a shared obligation among political coevals. In doing so, he undercuts the United States' racist foreign policies toward Haiti and Liberia in a brilliant gotcha moment: although the United States adamantly refused to recognize the independence of these Black republics until the Civil War made diplomatic relations expedient, it had ironically already officially recognized the "colored republic" of Nicaragua by sending Squier as a formally appointed diplomat.

Ultimately, though, McCune Smith's claim that "Nicaragua is a colored republic" does not propose a substitute for Squier's whitening project in which a Black colonization scheme would correspondingly transform the local population. Instead, he asserts Nicaragua's political autonomy *as* a "colored republic" and therefore affirms its potential as a haven for Black men and women interested in emigrating from the United States—a project he

leaves to individual choice rather than endorsing as an organized program.[69] Furthermore, as we will see in the next section, asserting Nicaragua's status as a "colored republic" was not only a negative claim designed to efface the foundations of Squier's political arguments. In that cleared plot, the raw data of *Nicaragua* allowed McCune Smith to construct a novel vision for the future of the region, its inhabitants, and people of color more broadly.

For Whom the Coral Toils

While these withering critiques of Squier are admittedly gratifying on their own, to interpret McCune Smith's review as strictly a response to *Nicaragua* is to overlook its capacious political imagination. Although neither portion of the two-part review divulges a specific prospectus for Nicaragua's future, a coherent georacial logic nevertheless emerges when we consider it within McCune Smith's broader oeuvre, revealing a vision of American development that supersedes Squier's. As suggested in the opening to this chapter, McCune Smith's authorial persona in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Communipaw) provides insight into why Nicaragua's "political and commercial importance cannot be overestimated."[70] As Carla Peterson observes, Communipaw (the place) became famous through three different short stories in Diedrich Knickerbocker's (Washington Irving) folk histories of New York. Although these tales depicted the colony as a multicultural utopia, the Dutch eventually abandoned Communipaw to found New York City, and the colony collapsed: "They lived in perfect harmony with both Native Americans and 'Dutch Negroes,' whom Knickerbocker credited with 'being infinitely more adventurous and knowing than their masters,' until a group of Dutchmen decided to sail 'in quest of a new seat of empire' and settled on the island of Manna-hatta. If you accepted Knickerbocker's version of history, Communipaw was the original Dutch settlement antedating Manhattan, a small harmonious interracial community rather than a seat of empire."[71]

McCune Smith embraced this history. Just as colonists literally deserted Communipaw for Manhattan, he argues, they figuratively abandoned its communalist ethics in favor of imperialist ones. If modern New York—one of the United States' first political capitals and its enduring cultural, economic capital—represents a synecdoche for the power and wealth the United States would accumulate through extractive capitalism and stolen Black, Indigenous, Asian, and Hispanic labor over the next centuries, then Communipaw, by contrast, represents a historical experiment in egalitarian

pluralism that was prematurely abandoned. Contesting these origins thereby *unsettles* US-American imperial history in Anna Brickhouse's sense of that term: by harking back to Communipaw as a place of origin (instead of Plymouth or Jamestown), McCune Smith excavates "not merely the contingency and noninevitability [of Euro-American settlement] but the glaring incompleteness of the history of the New World as we currently know and write it."[72] To that end, McCune Smith not only proffers an alternative origin story for the colonization and settlement of North America but also builds an implicit case for how Nicaragua could cultivate and sustain a new instantiation of Communipaw: a multiracial community resistant to external impositions and committed to social, intellectual, and moral progress.

Though McCune Smith only discusses the particulars of Communipaw in passing and though his reviews of *Nicaragua* are his only extant meditations on Central America, his ongoing counter-theorization of Civilization brings into relief the implications of reformulating Squier's conclusions and routes them into the project of unsettlement. As the philosophical and rhetorical bedrock on which colonialism, slavery, and racial capitalism were built, Civilization is at best a fraught concept—and yet McCune Smith, an intellectual deeply invested in the advancement of rational knowledge, endeavors to disarm and redeem this idea. We can see a nascent effort in his "Heads of the Colored People" series for *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Printed ten months before he reviewed *Nicaragua*, the inaugural sketch ("The Black News-Vender") "endeavor[s] to win the post of door keeper . . . to the Republic of Letters."[73] Traditionally, "citizenship" in the Republic of Letters (a post-Enlightenment metaphor for Civilization) required participation in European salons and academies, but McCune Smith's writings radically democratize access to "that glorious commonwealth, perpetually progressive, free from *caste*, and [Lewis] Cass and [Millard] Fillmores, which smiles upon all her citizens."[74] Not only do these proscriptive allusions to a former presidential candidate and fervent opponent of the Wilmot Proviso (Cass) and the president who helped defeat it (Fillmore) locate the Republic of Letters as outside slavery's ambit but, as Derrick Spires argues, McCune Smith transforms this elitist arena of ideas into an "intellectual and civic project" designed to sustain "free circulation" between the otherwise segregated spheres of Black working-class "genius" and the "lettered" spaces of wealth, government, and formal education.[75] Moreover, if, as McCune Smith claims, "the genius of the institutions of America" is their manner of "gathering around them and fostering the mechanical genius and enterprize from every portion of the Globe," then that distinctly American insti-

tution from which the Republic of Letters takes its name (republic) also required global intellectual exchange.[76] Consequently, he argues that as a purveyor of newspapers—arguably the era's primary vehicle for written knowledge transmission—the Black news vendor of Lower Manhattan should be unquestioningly admitted to the Republic of Letters. He extends this logic even further, however. By foregrounding its predication on multi-directional international networks of information transmission and knowledge building—whether in storied European academic institutions, the proletarian domestic and commercial spaces of a transit hub like antebellum Manhattan, or even the transatlantic vessels that trafficked kidnapped Africans to and throughout the Americas—McCune Smith ultimately positions African Americans of all classes squarely within the Republic of Letters.

We can see the evolution of these ideas several years later in his "Civilization: Its Dependence on Physical Circumstances" (1859). The essay expounds on his understanding of the Republic of Letters as comprising diverse forms of "genius" across classes, castes, educations, and geographies. Through a historically sprawling analysis of climate, geography, and culture, he eventually develops an axiom on social progress: "Wherever [the institutions of mankind] favor a free admixture of human thought, there civilization advances; but wherever human institutions isolate human thought, keep soul from communion with its fellow soul, there progress ceases."[77] The conditions for such admixture, he explains, required not only the existence of racial, cultural, and educational diversity but also the constant renewal and conservation of that diversity. Because McCune Smith believed in environmental determinism (a thesis advanced in many of his contemporaries' proto-evolutionary theories), his own definition of civilization dictates that, left in isolation, people living in the same region would trend toward homogeneity and therefore cultural stagnation: "Since civilization depends on the frequent intercourse of men differing in physical and mental endowments, it follows that whatever geographical positions throw together men thus differently endowed, such positions, or localities, or assemblage of localities, of themselves essentially conduce to civilization."[78] This description of the places most conducive to cultivating civilization immediately recalls Communipaw—a bustling commercial port linking the Hudson River valley to the Atlantic world. Its successes, McCune Smith implies, stemmed from the constant regeneration of its heterogeneous character through its residents' ongoing exposure to ships bringing new ideas, cultures, and neighbors. By the same token, though, this descriptive landscape should also recall McCune

Smith's portrait of Nicaragua as "the great highway between the oceans."[79] As a channel for burgeoning global commerce, Nicaragua could continually diversify its already multicultural population with a near constant influx of travelers and migrants. Furthermore, because "a country frequently interspersed with mountains, plains, rivers and sea coasts" will "produce greater physical and mental variety in the inhabitants," Nicaragua's topographical variety compared favorably to the Hudson River valley's relative monotony.[80] Read together, then, McCune Smith's writings contend that Nicaragua offered fecund terrain for cultivating a capital of the Republic of Letters, where its diverse topography, climate, and population could sustain the pluralism necessary for perpetual progress.[81]

Before elaborating on McCune Smith's description of the practical mechanics for reconstructing Communipaw in Central America, I want to frame this discussion around several key questions. Apart from accidents of geography, why was Nicaragua the millennial milieu for undertaking that project? Does shifting the cradle of Civilization outside the United States and into Nicaragua unsettle or simply reroute imperialist impulses? In what meaningful ways does McCune Smith's call for constant intercourse among diverse populations differ from Squier's call for proto-eugenic racial absorption? Can McCune Smith's radical embrace of race's social constructedness at the heart of his proposals ever avoid the trappings of anti-Blackness? And can concepts like Civilization or the republican ideals of the United States ever be redeemed?

Before proceeding, then, we must refine from McCune Smith's deconstruction of Squier's racialist thinking a positivist definition of race itself. That is, if he contends that race emerges from recursive racecraft designed to reify the primary scripts of white supremacy, then what utility did such a concept hold for a man of science like McCune Smith? The answer is somewhat surprising. Toward the conclusion of *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*—tellingly titled after a line from McCune Smith's review of *Nicaragua*—Dain examines the theory of "environmentalist typology" that McCune Smith advances in "Civilization." A by-product of his antiracist critiques of Squier's science, this theory defines "races as populations best understood in terms of average types," which developed according to local conditions: "Each series of circumstances in the world created its own 'average man'; each environmentally produced race, each environmentally shaped civilization yielded its own distinctive physiological 'type.'"[82] Put differently, "race" was not real or prelinguistic in the ontobiological sense of "stock races," as most US-American ethnologists claimed. Instead, it emerged discursively as cultural meaning was assigned to physical differences that progressively developed

according to environmental conditions. Or, as Stuart Hall later explains, "there are indeed material differences of all sorts in the world. . . . However, it is only when these differences have been organized within discourse, as a system of marked differentiations, that the resulting categories can be said to acquire meaning, become a factor in human culture, regulate conduct, and have real effects on everyday social practices."[83] Analogously, McCune Smith squares his environmentalist theory of human diversity with a constructionist understanding of race: in regarding the mean expressions of physical traits developed within a local region according to a local environment as static (representative of a static, "natural" race), his contemporaries weaponized the explanatory power of science to obscure how their articulations of race as ontobiological reality simply assign meaning to difference within an existing epistemology of Euro-American cultural superiority. As a result, recognizing the environmental factors that shaped human difference was not conceding the existence of stock races but rather a method of exposing the instability of race over time and the cultural forces that seek to naturalize and hierarchize physical differences.

This environmental theory leads McCune Smith to two fundamental conclusions. First, unsettling the notion that racial distinctions were natural and enduring, he further undermines any claims about the innateness of white racial superiority. "Far from being a distinct race of mankind, endowed, as a race, with superior genius," he writes, the "Anglo-Saxon" race is neither pure nor primordial. Instead, it is "an admixture of all the Indo-European races, and owes its great energy to this very admixture and the fortunate accidents of a fine climate and otherwise favorable geographical position."[84] Beyond undercutting the "facticity" of white supremacy, this claim also advances a compelling critique of Manifest Destiny's claims to perfecting Civilization in North America. McCune Smith argues that Manifest Destiny fatally misapprehends the actual source of "Anglo-Saxon" ascendancy in North America, which is not their purported purity or chosenness but rather their heterogeneous character and the continent's varied climate and topography. If we recall McCune Smith's axiom regarding human progress ("wherever [the institutions of mankind] favor a free admixture of human thought, there civilization advances; but wherever human institutions isolate human thought, keep soul from communion with its fellow soul, there progress ceases"), then the stakes of this challenge are nothing short of the fate of Civilization. With its intransigent investments in racial, religious, linguistic, and cultural homogeneity, the realization of Manifest Destiny would effectuate the stagnation of progress in the United States.

Thus, even though North America provided "a territory . . . sufficiently diversified by geographical position—constantly to reproduce variously endowed men," white US-American investments in slavery and racial caste fortified "the last barrier in the way of our national advancement."[85] In fact, according to McCune Smith, the greatest obstacles to the United States achieving its Manifest Destiny were, ironically, the white nationalism and white supremacy that invigorated it. Instead of the allegedly alchemical homogenization of many into one that animates Squier's racial absorption theory and interventionist foreign policy and serves as the US-American motto (e pluribus unum), McCune Smith reminds us that the etymology of "civilization" derives from another Latin phrase: *in unum cœuntes vivunt,* or "coming together to live as one."[86] Civilization, therefore, requires ongoing intellectual and sexual intercourse (as the Latin root *coeō*—as in *coitus*—suggests) among the diverse inhabitants of a pluralistic society. Once more, he shows how Squier's anti-Black prejudices lead him to the wrong conclusion: the objective should not be the absorption of "lesser" races into the "Anglo-Saxon" race, but rather the constant transformation and evolution of the population as part of the progressive advancement of Civilization.

McCune Smith's second conclusion therefore entails the uncoupling of skin color and race. While the implications of this conclusion are immediately recognizable in his critique of the white gaze producing a "constructive negro," this theory also commits him to some radical and controversial repercussions for Afro-descended people. For example, his environmentalism dictates that over several generations, the United States would start to develop its own distinctive "racial" character as populations interacted and intermarried within the continental crucible of North America. As a result, he cautions that Black men and women should not develop a collective identity based on skin color, since that of their descendants would certainly change: "Learn to look at your complexion as a thing which in your descendants will pass away: laws, stronger than you will inexorably declare, 'Black spirits and white, / . . . / Mingle, mingle, mingle.' and however dear to you may be your ebon hue, your great grandchildren will be 'many a whitey brown'; and when you marry, or if you are married, you will tend the same way."[87] This comment finds context in an earlier essay-length analysis of the United States' population ("The Destiny of the People of Color" [1843]), wherein McCune Smith argues that the overwhelming white majority and demographic trends indicated that "the day will come when the colored population of these United States shall have entirely disappeared" and that Blackness—defined as skin color, at least—would incrementally vanish as well.[88]

Thus, because physical differences may fade over generations, McCune Smith contends that Blackness should be divorced from skin color. Rather than a physical manifestation of a racial essence, Blackness emerges in McCune Smith's writings as "a political action aimed at advancing specific goals, rather than the naming of an always already obvious identity" tied to fictions of ontobiological race.[89] Such an uncoupling afforded an opportunity. "Notwithstanding a time may come when the descendants of our people shall no longer be distinguished by any physical peculiarity," he writes, "yet it is clear that a destiny awaits them which they must fulfill, and which will greatly affect whoever may live during and after its fulfillment."[90] By diminishing the importance of skin color, McCune Smith asserts that political Blackness entails a disidentification with Manifest Destiny in which it was not "Anglo-Saxons" but rather people of African descent who were fated to become the stewards of Civilization. Without emulating Manifest Destiny's hubristic fantasy of white supremacy rooted in essentialist fictions of an "Anglo-Saxon" race, however, he roots the destiny of African Americans in the United States in a materialist history. Citing "the laws which govern nature" and manifold historical examples, he prophesies a demographic and political revolution: a "gradually diminishing ratio" of African Americans in the United States would "ultimately obtain a ruling influence over their oppressors" and, from that position of power, "utter the earnest pleadings of down trodden humanity" and "spread over our common country the holy influence of principles, the glorious light of Truth." Their destiny, then, would be to "produce the oratory of this Republic" for future generations, even though, during their own lifetimes, the United States' foundational rhetoric and promises of equality would "exist only in the imagination."[91] For McCune Smith, antebellum Black people were fighting a multigenerational war against unjust caste systems (including but not limited to slavery) because the vocation of political Blackness is to perfect US-American democracy, even if that labor entailed the self-effacement of Blackness qua skin color.[92]

As the invocation of "destiny" here makes clear, however, such trends were not to be feared but embraced. Whereas ethnologists like Squier might interpret the gradual disappearance of physical Blackness as evidence of "Anglo-Saxons" absorbing "lesser races," McCune Smith contends that this trajectory foregrounds an essential role for African Americans in the United States and the hemisphere. Furthermore, because the United States sought to expand its "Anglo-Saxonist" paradigm throughout the Americas, McCune Smith identifies Nicaragua as the American theater for the future of Civilization. Manifest Destiny's ideological stranglehold in the United States was

threatening to suffocate the nation's potential, and if Nicaragua were subjected to Squier's program of white immigration and sexual colonization, it would cement US-American influence in Central America and likely doom the entire hemisphere to cultural stagnation. Alternatively, a strategically positioned "colored republic" fashioned after the pluralistic democracy of Communipaw would not only form a bulwark against the disastrous US-American expansion into South America but also establish roots for a community better designed to preserve the diversity necessary for advancing Civilization. The destiny of African Americans in the United States, then, would be to lead the Americas in that transnational mission.

Grandiose though such rhetoric may be, McCune Smith clarifies that undertaking the work necessary for progressing Civilization would be laborious and self-sacrificial for present generations, risking the erosion of physical Blackness over time so that posterity might unveil "the glorious light of Truth." Expounding on the multigenerational mechanics and providential payoff of that mission, McCune Smith closes "Civilization" with a lengthy conceit about the "coral insect" (polyps). As naturalists learned in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these invertebrates grow by secreting limestone calicles that fuse together, eventually forming intricate reefs and atolls over the course of hundreds of years. McCune Smith limns coral's labor as an allegory for African Americans striving to advance Civilization:

> Let us toil on, then, and with hope. Away down in the depths of ocean, scarcely reached by the light of the sun, the coral insect toils on through years and years; the insect perishes, but its labors live, and pile on pile, its tiny successors continually lay, whilst the years roll on. At length, uncounted ages having glided by, the tiny laborers reach the surface of the sea; the waves joyfully caress the visitant, and the birds of the air rest, their weary wings in the same, and air and ocean bring their offerings to the successful laborer; at length the ships of the sea come, and find a refuge from the tempest; men erect their dwellings, society is organized, and the Great Father of all is glorified;—and all this has come from the noiseless toil of the little laborer, only gifted with instinct, in the depths of the ocean. In what are called the Dark Ages, when the ocean of ignorance and superstition, dammed up by the iron of caste, kept the human mind stagnant, unmoved, there were, here and there in stony cells, hundreds of monks, who plied their unwearied pens in transcribing and illuminating with fantastic

> figures, the lore of Ancient Greece and Rome. Long years rolled by, and from the humble toil of theirs, the glory of modern letters and the light of modern Science have arisen. Higher, far higher than the labor of the coral, loftier than the toil of the monks, is the work allotted to the man of color in these United States; like them he is doomed to toil, but he toils with a reward constantly in his grasp, with the glorious result full in his view; he knows that the progress of mankind is entrusted to his keeping, and he toils for the advent of that time of "blissful tranquility" for the race, "when the spiritual shall become regnant over the carnal."[93]

As an ecological locus of exceptional biodiversity (a quarter of all ocean life), coral reefs fittingly symbolize both the historical Communipaw and the Central American Communipaw that McCune Smith imagines in Nicaragua. At the same time, his invocation of coral marks a deliberate intervention into antebellum science—not as a refutation of scientific racism this time but as a literary interpretation of incipient evolutionary theory. Coral becomes an especially loaded metaphor when we consider that "Civilization" appeared in the inaugural issue of the *Anglo-African Magazine* just months before Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin had written extensively on reefs in both *Journal and Remarks* (1839) and *The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs* (1842), and as David Dobbs notes, "It's hard to overstate how vital Darwin's coral reef theory was in developing his career and thinking." After observing coral reefs firsthand during his travels aboard the HMS *Beagle*, Darwin grew fascinated with the geomorphology of coral, and its slow incremental development prompted his consideration of species' gradual transmutation over time: "The coral reef theory described how small, virtually unnoticeable changes could create differences of essential type in seemingly immutable forms—and in doing so, account for broad patterns of development and difference."[94] Similarly, the coral reef's incremental development spurred McCune Smith to consider the gradual transmutation of races through cultural and sexual intercourse over "years and years" and "uncounted ages." Like Wai Chee Dimock's examination of US-American literature from the perspective of "deep time" (beyond the narrow spatial and temporal perspectives of "the nation"), McCune Smith dilates the scope of his discourse on human diversity to contour the longer history of human progress as a teleological advancement toward the asymptote of perfect Civilization.[95] Adopting the coral reef's epochal scale downplays the significance of any individual race (and even race itself) in the *longue durée* of humanity,

privileging instead the interminable progress narrative of Civilization. By examining racial diversity from the perspective of deep time—from the perspective of the coral reef—McCune Smith argues that transhistorical or essentializing claims about race mark a hubristic effort to assign ontobiological realness to an ephemeral snapshot in human evolution.

In emphasizing the biodiversity of the coral reef and its protracted multigenerational construction, McCune Smith also speaks back to the imperialist instrumentalization of coral metaphors. “In an age of positivist science and Enlightenment influence,” Ann Elias shows, “a marine animal that also built toward the light embodied a useful social symbol for enlightened Europeans,” ultimately transforming coral reefs into “a metaphorical space to assert the rightness and goodness of the empire’s own colonizing practice of expansion.” Such metaphors, however, belie the violence of colonialism, constructing a fiction of empire-building in which it is the collaborative industry of “politicians, military figures, artists, historians, farmers, and mariners” rather than the exploitation of Black and Indigenous labor.[96] McCune Smith, by contrast, foregrounds these contributions *and* the violence they enact by attending not only to the grandeur of reefs but to the slow process by which reefs expand. Indeed, the calicles that form the reefs themselves are frequently referred to as skeletons, and McCune Smith adds a poetically morbid gloss to the word, suggesting that coral polyps are literally using the skeletons of their predecessors and ancestors as the building materials for their magnificent reefs. Instead of erasing this violence, McCune Smith renarrates Black and Indigenous labor as a noble form of self-effacement and self-sacrifice for a greater good: not exploited drudgery for the expansion and enrichment of Euro-American empires but rather the stewardship of Civilization itself against the degenerative effects of white impulses toward cultural homogenization, including the white nationalism essential to US-American imperialism. To understand McCune Smith’s theorizing here, Darwin’s reef writings are once more instructive. Darwin challenged the prevailing view that Pacific atolls were situated atop rising submarine mountains, arguing instead that they were the apexes of slowly sinking land masses. This subsidence theory of coral formation was highly influential, leading Charles Lyell to wax poetic on Darwin’s claims: “Coral islands are the last efforts of drowning continents to lift their heads above water.”[97] If we consider such an image alongside McCune Smith’s coral conceit, then the American continent is figuratively sinking and drowning in the oceanic depths of “ignorance and superstition” because the “civilizing mission” of Manifest Destiny is an assimilationist project de-

signed to erase the kinds of diversity necessary for the incremental progress of Civilization. Like the coral polyp surrounded by literal darkness in the depths of the ocean, then, African Americans in the United States toil against the figurative darkness of "Anglo-Saxonist" ignorance to elevate Civilization toward the heavens atop the sinking continent beneath them.

The glory of such labor, however, requires the kind of self-sacrifice and self-effacement enabled by the conditions of *parahumanity*. According to Monique Allewaert, parahumanity describes "a response to the brutalization of the human body in the Atlantic world that is not grounded on a desire for the constitution of the body as an enclosed and organic form," yielding a "form of personhood [that] is not melancholically cathected to organizations of the body and the person that were impossible in the American tropics."[98] By rejecting Enlightenment investments in radical individualism, McCune Smith highlights the collective labor of coral polyps as a form of civic personhood liberated from the temporal containment of a single lifetime, the physical containment of a single body, and the genealogical containment of race. In the same way that the "insect perishes, but its labors live" on in the form of an ecosystem that relies on and preserves biodiversity, "the work allotted to the man of color in these United States" is the "noiseless toil" of eroding the idea of ontobiological race to encourage the kind of multicultural intercourse necessary for the progress of Civilization. Syllogistically likening coral polyps growing reefs atop "pile on pile" of their own skeletons to African Americans sacrificing their own investments in race (qua skin color) and individualism, McCune Smith defines the higher purpose or destiny such sacrifices enabled: "the advent of that time of 'blissful tranquility' for the [human] race" and "the glory of modern letters and the light of modern Science"; that is, the preservation and progress of Civilization itself.

I want to pause here briefly to address a likely concern regarding McCune Smith's theorizing of Civilization, which treads dangerously close to a kind of proto-postracialism in which interracial intercourse eventually yields a universally multiracial population, thereby eroding any and all racial differences. Indeed, McCune Smith's position was controversial even in its time, as seen in an extended debate with William J. Wilson (writing as "Ethiop") in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Although McCune Smith rejects ontobiological race predicated on essentialist conceptions of natural divisions and stock races, physical difference and physical diversity nevertheless remain essential to the progressive pursuit of Civilization. That is, he is specifically not indulging Pollyannaish white fantasies of a "glorious post-race apocalypse," fantasies that insidiously expunge the history of anti-Black violence and Black

organizing in order to foreclose future forms of communal Black politics.[99] And, more importantly, he is not proposing a homogeneous beige future but rather one in which biracialism and multiracialism create new forms of diversity—diversity he regards as indispensable to a community's political, cultural, and economic welfare. Nevertheless, modern critiques of postracialism as a putatively progressive vehicle for clandestine anti-Blackness illuminate some potentially troubling implications for McCune Smith's theorizing, which could be read as an abnegation of the history of Black radicalism, a framing of Black identities as anathema to a democratic future, internalized white supremacy manifesting as Black self-loathing, or a naive invitation to Black annihilation, which white supremacists would be all too happy to oblige.[100]

Such concerns are perhaps best summarized in philosopher Lewis Gordon's explanation for why romantic discourses of postracialism so frequently fail to move beyond the racism they aim to combat: "There is no way to reject the thesis that there is something wrong being black beyond the willingness to 'be' black—not in terms of convenient fads of playing blackness, but by paying the social costs of anti-blackness on a global scale. Against the raceless credo, then, racism cannot be rejected without a dialectic in which humanity experiences a blackened world."[101] This critique prompts an earnest question: What would a dialectic progression toward postracial multiracialism look like when articulated from the perspectives of a "blackened world"? While Bertram Ashe, Michele Elam, and Sika Dagbovie-Mullins have all explored aesthetic experimentations with Black–white biracial identities and politics in post–civil rights literature, McCune Smith begins to imagine what these writers have variously termed *blaxploration, critical mulattoesque,* and *black-sentient mixed-race identity* in a crucial moment for the geopolitical development of the mid-nineteenth-century Americas.[102]

Anticipating their thinking, his theorizing of multiracialism and Civilization does not controvert the politics of Blackness. On the contrary, he insists that the abolition of ontobiological race *is* the politics of Blackness because it recognizes race as liberal technology deliberately designed to restrict access to its most empowering political categories (humanity, citizenship, natural rights, and so on).[103] Furthermore, McCune Smith's emphatic framing of Civilization as a telos toward which Black people are "doomed to toil" appropriately darkens the outlook from any rose-tinted glasses. His call for Black and white to "mingle, mingle, mingle" is not so ingenuous as to imagine that embracing amalgamation would provide an easy out for African Americans in the United States trying to escape anti-Black violence. In-

stead, his repetition of industrious diction throughout his coral conceit ("labor," "work," "toil") underscores the onerousness of the task at hand. If the wage for this cumbersome labor is "loftier" and more "glorious" than "the glory of modern letters and the light of modern Science," then it is because the labor itself incurs what Gordon calls "the social costs of anti-blackness on a global scale." Significantly, then, McCune Smith's belief in African Americans' capacity to advance sustainable practices of Civilization (the mingling and toiling of Communipaw) emanates from their capacity to survive anti-Blackness. It is precisely this violence and these experiences, he contends, that enable Afro-descended people to imagine more inclusive communities capable of fostering Civilization—communities shaped by the "experiences of a blackened world."[104] We may recall, for instance, how McCune Smith's contention that even cursory knowledge of the West African ethnography destabilizes Squier's claims about African Americans in the United States possessing distinct origins from those in Nicaragua, texturing Blackness throughout these regions (and West Africa) precisely where Squier strains to flatten these differences. On the one hand, this *diaspora sensibility* emphasizes the indelible violence that race has wrought (comparing the Wolof ancestors of African Americans in the United States and Nicaragua demands reckoning with the Wolofs' demographic redistribution in the Americas through the transatlantic slave trade).[105] Even as he deconstructs Squier's "constructive negro" and unravels our understanding of stock races, he refuses to repudiate the violent history of race or the Black political communities that emerged in response to it. On the other hand, in contradistinction to the many post–civil rights articulations of postracialism that imagine multiracialism as a means of erasing physical racial differences in order to obscure the ideological rituals of racism, McCune Smith's vision explicitly rejects homogenization. In fact, he regards the ineluctability of physical, cultural, and intellectual diversity as the enabling condition for the kinds of exchange and growth necessary to advance Civilization. In these ways, he begins to imagine a world in which, even though the intractable ontologies of race have dissipated, a Black ethos shaped by the experiences of the violence they created continues to inform how individuals and societies navigate difference.

Conclusion

Ultimately, McCune Smith's vision of a Central American Communipaw proved just as fictitious as Washington Irving's and just as hopeful as the

National Emigration Convention's. Interrupted by civil wars in both Nicaragua and the United States, the proposed canal was never realized and organized Black colonization of Central America never took place. Although the convention's delegates pledged to form a "competent commission to Central, South America and the West Indies, whose duty it shall be to obtain the necessary information relating to these countries, and report thereon," they were ultimately unsuccessful.[106] Efforts to schedule subsequent conventions and establish an emigrationist periodical were similarly unfruitful.[107] Surprisingly, though, the organizers found an unlikely ally in Congress when Rep. Francis P. Blair Jr. (R-MO) proposed sponsoring the colonization of formerly enslaved people to Central America in the wake of William Walker's filibustering in the region.[108] Enthused by one of Blair's published speeches, the emigrationists' national board wrote to apprise him of their support. James Theodore Holly advised him that "the subject has actively occupied the attention of this class of persons themselves since 1854" and boasted that the emigrationist fervor witnessed in Cleveland was "but a feeble expression" of the movement's size and momentum, while James Whitfield complained that "while there are hundreds—yes, thousands—of enterprising and industrious colored men, ready and anxious to embark immediately in any feasible movement of emigration to either of the places named, the means to commence such a movement properly are not attainable among them."[109] They thanked Blair in hopes he would advocate for those means in Congress, and the support they eventually garnered briefly reenergized the movement. J. Dennis Harris and H. Ford Douglas—a member of the 1854 convention's Business Committee—formed the Central American Land Company as "a nucleus for the colonial policy advocated in Congress by Messrs. Blair, Doolittle, and King." The company would "issue certificates of shares of fifty dollars" to support "a delegation of colored men as Commissioners to select a permanent location, purchase the land, and upon their return sell the same in suitable quantities to such persons as wish to establish themselves in a free and independent country."[110] For reasons unknown, however, the delegation never seems to have undertaken that mission.[111] By the third and final meeting of the National Emigration Convention in Chatham, Canada West (1858), the organizers had revised their mission so dramatically that, according to Richard Blackett, they abandoned their "active emigrationist *raison d'etre*," and their ambitions in the Americas faded.[112]

Unduly emphasizing these movements' failures to forge a "colored" confederation of American republics, to found a Black nation in Central Amer-

ica, or even to sponsor actual emigrants, however, overlooks two remarkable aspects of the prospectuses I have detailed in this chapter. The fact that the visions of McCune Smith and the National Emigration Convention were *not* realized is precisely the point. While we might generously interpret their unactualized goals (especially the convention's) as evidence of an awakening to and eventual retreat from imitating the neocolonial ventures of their own oppressors, each of their visions nevertheless articulates a savvy exposé of racialization as a technology of imperial expansion.

Rather than understanding this strictly rhetorical dimension of their critiques as a limitation, I follow Lisa Lowe in understanding such unbound archives of unrealized futures as fecund territory for imagining global development otherwise. In his attempts to reconfigure the "local, regional, and differential" articulations of race in and about Nicaragua—itself a crucible for "the intimacies of four continents"—McCune Smith presents us with an opportunity to explore *what could have been*.[113] What would the last 200 years of globalization have looked like, for example, if an autonomous Central American Communipaw governed an interoceanic waterway constructed for and by people of color in the 1850s? How might the concentration of wealth in a "colored republic" in Central America have combated transnational anti-Blackness? What effects would a Central American Communipaw have had on the European and US-American embargoes on Haiti, and how might a trade alliance with another "colored republic" have brought political and economic stability to Haiti and Liberia? What other sorts of international multiracial coalitions might have formed in the circum-Caribbean region? How might the economic success of the region have truncated or reversed the underdevelopment of Latin America? How might such a state have eclipsed US-American interventionism in Central America, including the exploitative and deadly construction of the Panama Canal, the aggressively interventionist foreign policies spurred by the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and the state-sponsored coups authorized by Cold War paranoias about the domino theory? That we may never know the answers to these questions hardly undermines their utility as provocations and even calls to action in the present. But while this chapter has focused on the imaginative alternatives to white nationalist modes of US-American expansionism, chapter 3 turns to examine how African Americans living in the borderlands of Manifest Destiny engaged the racial ideologies that the United States literally mapped onto them.

CHAPTER THREE

Restaging Gender in the Black Borderlands of Canada West

> The Door of No Return—real and metaphoric as some places, mythic to those of us scattered in the Americas today. To have one's belonging lodged in a metaphor is voluptuous intrigue; to inhabit a trope; to be a kind of fiction. To live in the Black Diaspora is I think to live as a fiction—a creation of empires, and also self-creation.
>
> —DIONNE BRAND, *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2011)

> Though [a] native of a different State, still in anything relating to our people, I am insensible of boundaries.
>
> —MARY ANN SHADD to *North Star* (23 March 1849)

In a departure from chapters 1 and 2, which discussed unrealized imperialist fantasies in West Africa and Central America, this chapter turns to the opportunities and crises that the realities of US-American expansion created. By 1854, the annexation of Texas, the Oregon Treaty, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and the Gadsden Purchase had effectively demarcated the modern boundaries of the contiguous United States. At the time, though, this rapid growth indexed promising progress toward Manifest Destiny but not necessarily its culmination. Most people within and without the United States anticipated that expansion would continue. While such prospects posed imminent dangers to Indigenous nations, French and British settler-colonists, enslaved people in the Caribbean, and the citizens of Mexico, they became especially urgent for the tens of thousands of refugees from slavery who had fled the United States for Canada.[1] As traffic aboard the Underground Railroad increased dramatically following the Fugitive Slave Law (1850), so too did Black settlements, support networks, and community resources in Canada West (modern Ontario). The result was a dense spatio-temporal node of Black activism within the British colony, including an organized emigration movement supported by an infrastructure of Black print culture on both sides of the US–Canada border.

This chapter frames this region as a Black borderlands, where the realness, fictionality, and fluidity of the border afforded the conditions of possibility for Black migrants to (re)imagine individual and collective identities

that promiscuously and pragmatically recombine elements of US-American republicanism, British abolitionism, and Black (inter)nationalism. The borderlands are paradigmatically defined by Gloria Anzaldúa, whose multilingual autoethnography theorizes the US-Mexico region as a space shaped by and constitutive of cultural, racial, sexual, and linguistic *mestizaje*, yielding "a constant state of transition" where individuals are "cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems."[2] As a colony governed by the British abolition of slavery (1834) but increasingly neglected under British imperial rule—the British North America Act (1867) united the Canadas, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick into a sovereign confederation—Canada West provided Black internationalists a similarly multicultural terrain for imagining Black futures in North America. Christopher Taylor's contention that Black and Brown West Indians came to view the Americas "as an imaginative and practical site through which they could manage their functional expulsion from the imperial polity" can be extended to Black subjects in British Canada, who likewise "recall[ed] Britain to the promises that they associated with emancipation" and "drew on hemispheric American histories and geographies to model what emancipation, as an incorporation of black subjects into the imperial polity, *should* have been."[3] Unlike the nation-building projects undertaken in Liberia and imagined in Nicaragua, Black enterprises in British Canada did not necessarily envision the nation-state as the horizon of their efforts. Instead, the colony afforded geographical and discursive terrain to practice the liberal ideals constitutive of US-American republicanism *outside* US-American governmental structures, which emigrationists uniformly believed that racism had irreparably marred. At the same time, refugees hoped that the same disinclination toward military conflict with Great Britain that stalled the Nicaraguan canal project (discussed in chapter 2) would also dissuade the United States from encroaching into British Canada. Together, the potency of British antislavery laws, British obstructionism toward US-American imperialism, and laissez-faire colonial governance in Canada West all yielded space for free and self-emancipated Black people to imagine and even build something new.

Whereas chapters 1 and 2 have focused largely on how emigrationism reconceptualized political forms and relations at the levels of colony, state, and empire, this chapter pivots to examining how movement across the US–Canada border afforded opportunities to reconceptualize Black identities and restructure Black communities, particularly with respect to gender norms. In what follows, I examine the settler-colonial experiments of two

forerunners of Black borderlands culture, Henry Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd, whose writings (especially their competing newspapers) offer dense loci for exploring how the political liminality of Black refugees and emigrants in Canada West unsettled prevailing mores around masculinity, femininity, and separate spheres ideology, while nevertheless fundamentally disagreeing on what new gendered norms should replace them. The plot of Bibb's slave narrative, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (1849), for example, documents how the cultures of slavery and white supremacy in the United States categorically denied Black men access to "proper" performances of masculinity. Enslavers and their allies argued for Black moral inferiority by highlighting how enslaved men were frequently derelict in their duties as husbands and fathers, but such failures were inevitable as the domestic slave trade's routinization of family separation and quotidian sexual assaults of enslaved women structurally prohibited Black men's means of honoring these obligations. These frustrations prompt Bibb and his second wife and business partner, Mary Miles, to present Canada West as a site where Black men and women could finally perform the white bourgeois gender roles that slavery had denied them and that were considered essential to Black respectability politics. The Bibbs' vision for racial uplift, in other words, was about cultural transformation through access.

By contrast, Shadd's settler guide, *A Plea for Emigration* (1852), and her newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*, outline how even though Canada West represented what Elena Abbott calls an "international free-soil haven" for Black migrants ("places with the potential to free and protect the self-emancipated men and women and offer equal standing for free African American emigrants"), the patriarchy (inextricably interwoven with white supremacy) nevertheless transcends the US–Canada border.[4] As Carla Peterson observes, the intellectual culture of Black emigrationism was characterized by a "masculinist ideology of Negro nationality" that ultimately "replicate[s] the values of Western, Christian, capitalist patriarchy."[5] Against these overwhelmingly masculinist articulations of Black internationalism, Shadd posited intersectional reconfigurations of gendered social institutions and identities that might be realized amid the geographical, political, and cultural upheaval in the Black borderlands of Canada West, including centering feminine-coded labor as integral to Black community-building and opening women's access to masculine-coded political and economic arenas.

While the fluidity of gendered identities and sexualities is central to Anzaldúa's queer-of-color theorization of the US–Mexico region, an intersectional examination of Black experiences in the US–Canada border region

challenges romances of *hybridity*, as the pressures and incentives of respectability politics yield more fraught and sometimes less antagonistic relationships to white heteropatriarchy. Nevertheless, I am sensitive that the transposition of such terminologies across fields risks furthering the tendency in transnational American studies to propagate an "internationalization of US models of race and ethnicity" and a "simple extension of US-based paradigms" into other nations and intellectual traditions.[6] Because, however, "conventional social theory is not often concerned with the ethnopoetic or borderland feminist consciousness of the historically situated author or reader of a text," as José David Saldívar writes, it is precisely Anzaldúa's attention to acute localities of cultural formations, asymmetries of power, histories of colonial displacements, intersectionality, and ambivalence toward assimilation that makes borderlands methodologies so useful for understanding the corresponding aspects of how Black migrants navigate the US–Canada border.[7] For instance, if the US–Mexico border constructs whiteness as a racial identity defined against the Mexican Other and "signals how the ideological and discursive characteristics of whiteness and Americanness are coterminous," then what happens when we consider the collisions of racialization and national identity along the US–Canada border, where, as Kristin Moriah observes, "the dominant white cultures represented on either side" produce a transnational Anglo culture (whiteness) that is "more about affirming a Eurocentric *us* than defining a *them*"?[8] What happens when Black subjects flee a nation that refuses to recognize their citizenship or even humanity and settle in a nation that fantastically renders them as always already foreign? What happens when the diaspora tropes of fragmentation, dispersal, and unreturnability collide with the borderland tropes of permeability, hybridity, and ambivalence? And what happens when the modest governmental and cultural differences downplayed in Anglo-American appeals to a transnational white monoculture instead become pivotal distinctions for Black migrants, who could instrumentalize these differences to reimagine the racialized and gendered constraints against which they had fought in the United States?

By bringing border studies into dialogue with Taylor's insights on Black subjectivity at the intersection of trans-Americanism and Great Britain's declining interest in its American colonies, I argue in what follows that the region's blurred lines between the formalities of states and empires—a space whose indeterminacy is nevertheless structured by a meaningful geographical and political boundary—offered Black emigrants and refugees "a way into the nation without positing finished and transparent geographic

projects."[9] Speaking of the often overlooked Black presence in Canada (which predates the nineteenth-century exodus from the United States by hundreds of years), Katherine McKittrick underscores how the improvisatory nature of Blackness in daily life and social dynamics actually generates novel geographical thinking that does not necessarily culminate in a Black nation or nation-state. Instead of the more overtly separatist ideologies seen among many of their peers, Bibb and Shadd disidentify *within* existing political structures: the protections the British Empire afforded against US-American slavery, the opportunities for civic participation that their increasingly disinterested colonial governance afforded, and the promise of achieving the unrealized ideals of US-American democracy once outside the ambit of US-American Empire. Drawing on and improvising within these structures, they take seriously the double meaning of domesticity, which, according to Amy Kaplan, "links the space of the familial household to that of the nation, by imagining both in opposition to everything outside the geographic and conceptual border of the home."[10] By reimagining the range of intersectional identities and gendered performances accessible to Black refugees, migrants, and settlers in the US–Canada borderlands, Bibb and Shadd exploit the political instability of the "nation" in this region to destabilize racialized gender ideologies. The Black geography they theorize and experience offers both literal and figurative terrain for rethinking the Black cultural values that would shape the communities they sought to build in the porous contact zones mediating US-American and British imperialism.

Romancing the Border

Before discussing the experiential Black theorizing that emerges from the US–Canada borderlands, I want to situate the region in the debates over emigrationism surveyed in chapters 1 and 2. Canada had long been a destination for refugees from US-American slavery, dating back to the "Black loyalists" who sided with the British during the Revolutionary War. The Compromise of 1850, however, compromised the safety of Northern states, catalyzing an unprecedented wave of northward migration as Black activists and their white accomplices expanded the infrastructure of the Underground Railroad and as Black emigrationists began espousing Canada as the most practical sanctuary. Building on abolitionist literature's pervasive romanticization of Canada as "Canaan" or "the promised land" for refugees from slavery, one of the first issues of Shadd's *Provincial Freeman* (25 March 1854)

reprinted the call for the National Emigration Convention slated to take place in Cleveland six months later and offered its own readership (many of whom were refugees from US-American slavery or free Black migrants) as evidence of emigration's success and promise: "They have already passed the Rubicon, and, as far as we know, they have no reason to regret it."[11] This framing is instructive. Signifying "a decisive or irrevocable step at a critical moment of some undertaking or enterprise," the phrase "passed the Rubicon" refers to Julius Caesar crossing the eponymous river in violation of Roman imperium law, catalyzing a civil war that eventually resulted in his ascension as emperor.[12] By comparing the waterways dividing the United States from Canada West (especially the Detroit River and Lake Erie) to the Rubicon, the *Freeman* marks the irreversibility of Black flight to Canada as a physical and epistemic point of no return, the transcension of which precludes both the possibility and the thinkability of return. Emphasizing the *realness* of the United States' borders as Rubicons bolstered Black hopes that international borders could serve as meaningful jurisdictional demarcations between political states. The increased flow of Black refugees to regions beyond slavery's reach (especially to Canada and Mexico) aligned British and Mexican political interests not only with each other but also with the Black migrants seeking safe harbor within their borders: both nations repeatedly denied Southern efforts to extradite self-emancipated individuals back to the United States.[13] On the one hand, cooperatively pressuring the United States to abolish slavery by delegitimizing these extradition attempts would help to level trade competition between the United States and the wage-labor economies elsewhere in the Americas. On the other hand, these nonextradition policies asserted the British and Mexican governments' ability to contain US-American imperialism by reifying political borders that delimited slavery's international jurisdiction and expansion, thereby reinforcing their perimeters as "a crucial line of defense against the Americanization of the continent."[14]

At the same time, conceptualizing the US–Canada border as a Rubicon overlooks how it was anything but a point of no return for Black refugees and emigrants (figure 3.1). Before removing permanently to Great Britain after 1850, for instance, William Wells Brown frequently shuttled between Lake Erie's shores, using his employment aboard steamships to conduct refugees from slavery to Canada.[15] Similarly, Samuel Ringgold Ward—Shadd's business partner at the *Freeman*—wrote that even before he relocated to Canada as "a resident and a fugitive" in 1851, he "had been to Queenstown, Windsor, and Kingston, as well as Niagara Falls, at various times within eleven years as a mere visitor."[16] Even after the Fugitive Slave Law, though, renowned

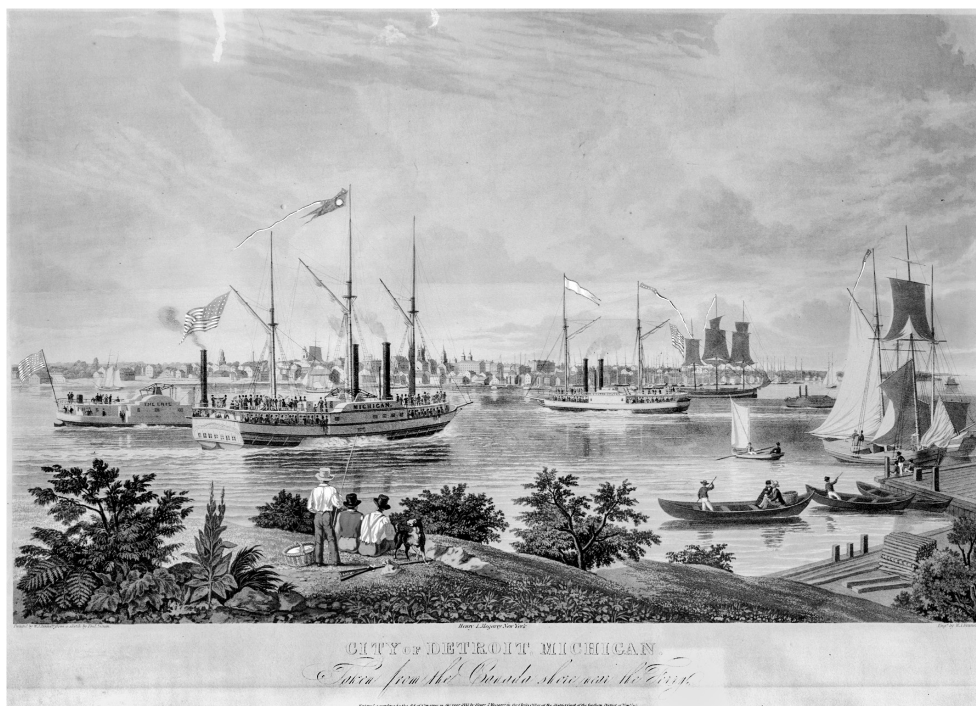


FIGURE 3.1 W. J. Bennett, *View of Detroit Waterfront, as Seen from Canada in 1836* (New York: Henry Megarey, 1837). Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

Black activists living in Canada—including Shadd, Ward, Bibb, Delany, and Josiah Henson—routinely returned to the United States for lecture tours, family visits, and conventions, even as they advocated for Black emigration to the colony. Moreover, most of the Black refugees and emigrants who "passed the Rubicon" eventually returned to the United States after the Civil War, either disenchanted with their prospects in Canada or eager to return to family.[17]

Consequently, I stress both the border's potential to obstruct imperial aggressions and its permeability to individual migrants (especially Black refugees), its juridical potency as a meaningful delimitation to the Fugitive Slave Law, and its porosity to the cultures and communities who cross it (sometimes repeatedly). The US–Canada border therefore emerges less as a point of no return and more akin to what Dionne Brand describes as a "door of no return," a metaphor that invokes the Middle Passage's irreversibility, the untraceability of Black genealogies, and the creation of new diasporic identities. "The door is a place, real, imaginary, and imagined," Brand writes; it

manifests psychically, mnemonically, and often viscerally, resulting in a collision of possibilities and impossibilities that enables "the creation of empires, and also self-creation."[18] It is the scales of creation that interest me here—the ways in which cultures and histories collide in the Black borderlands, affording African Americans opportunities to generate new selves, new relations, and even new nations. Because while their births in the United States and their (often overlooked) historical presence in Canada provided legitimate inroads to claims of belonging in either nation, Black migrants rejected both, aligning themselves instead with the political and cultural hybridity of the Black borderlands. By abnegating both nations but nevertheless maintaining "the right to nation," Black borderland thinkers came to ask a more substantive question about their affiliations and the basis of a Black community: a "nation predicated on what?"[19]

While scholars have recently begun to bring border studies to bear on the US–Canada region, 1850s Canada—in both abolitionist literature and modern historical framing—is often romanticized as a haven for refugees from US-American slavery.[20] At the time, however, Black activists (especially emigrationists) fundamentally disagreed over whether Canada was a viable option for long-term resettlement, whether large-scale emigration was feasible, and what the political future of Canada was relative to Great Britain and the United States. Shadd's *A Plea for Emigration* (1852)—a settlers' guide outlining the climate, agriculture, economy, politics, and existing settlements in Canada, before comparing its prospects to the Caribbean, Mexico, South America, and Africa—represents a dense locus of these debates.[21] Tellingly, Shadd considers each of these sites relative to the ambitions of US-American Empire. In addition to promoting Canada, for instance, she also endorses the British West Indies. While existing programs incentivizing immigration to the islands unfairly advantaged estate owners and required that "emigrants consent to be mere laborers instead of owners of the soil" (as opposed to Canada, where "there is every inducement to buy near or in towns, as well as in the country, as land is cheap"), Shadd believed a Black-led "system of voluntary emigration" could redress this emerging post-emancipation plantocracy.[22] More immediately, though, she argues, settling the British West Indies was essential to preventing the United States from colonizing the Caribbean and reinstating slavery. Written shortly after Narciso López's failed filibustering mission in Cuba (undertaken in collaboration with pro-slavery Southerners) and amid the intensifying expansionist fervor that led to Franklin Pierce's election, *Plea* describes emigration as an imperative for obviating the South's southward expansion: "To preserve those countries from the

ravages of slavery, should be the motive of their settlement by colored men. Jamaica, with its fine climate and rich soil, is the key to the gulf of Mexico. It is not distant from the United States, Cuba, nor Haiti; but, as if providentially, is just so positioned that, if properly garrisoned by colored free men, may, under Britain, promptly and effectually check foreign interference in its own policy, and any mischievous designs now in contemplation toward Cuba and Haiti."[23] These arguments supporting emigration to the British Caribbean employ the same logic undergirding Shadd's case for Canada, which her additional mention of Honduras (another British colony) brings into relief. After the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty (1850) seemingly defanged the United States from aggressively enforcing the Monroe Doctrine in Central America, the British were emboldened to defend their other American colonies as a means of curtailing US-American hemispheric dominion.[24] Shadd insinuates that the potency of British Empire offered Black emigrants a safeguard against the United States filibustering, colonizing, and reinstating slavery in British colonies. "What government is so powerful and so thoroughly impartial, as Her Majesty's; so practically anti-slavery and protective?" she asks, concluding that it is "*under British protection*" that Black community-building must take place.[25]

But if British protections might shield Black migrants in the Caribbean from US-American incursions, the same could not be said for Black migrants seeking refuge in the recently decolonized republics of Latin America, especially the United States' neighbor to the south. Although Mexico abolished slavery in 1829 and then refused to extradite the many fugitives from US-American slavery who sought refuge within its borders, Shadd, like many of her contemporaries, saw the invasion of Mexico as a harbinger of future invasions. "It needs no prophet to foretell the establishment of an empire formed out of the southern United States and Mexico," she writes, adding that "the pro-slavery party of the United States is the aggressive party on this continent" and that by "combining with the minority [proslavery faction in Mexico], the probability is a contest for the supremacy of slavery for a long time."[26] Notably, although Mexico presented several geographic advantages as a site for Black emigration (e.g., its proximity to Southern states, the Mississippi River, and the domestic slave trade's main hub, New Orleans), Shadd viewed that republic as a literal battlefield in the ideological war over slavery, wherein that same geographic proximity would facilitate Southern collusion with proslavery *gente de razón* (white Hispanic Mexicans) to reinforce and even expand slavery.[27]

Beyond the priorities of seeking "a strong position" like those British colonies offered and avoiding "the weakness . . . of Mexico," Shadd outlines several social differences that made emigration to Mexico impractical and even objectionable.[28] Most notably, the cultural chauvinism that spurs her condescension toward Haiti and Africa also distorts her views on Mexico and South America. "She saw these lands as fundamentally alien," Carla Peterson writes. "In them, the emigrants would be subjected to disease and malnutrition; their religious freedom would be in jeopardy; they would be forced to adapt to foreign social and political systems."[29] Tellingly, the section of *Plea* on Mexico ignores questions of climate and agriculture (primary concerns elsewhere) in favor of diatribes against "their want of toleration in matters of religion" and "the intimate connexion of the State with the Romish Church," while bemoaning that "whatever people go to Mexico and adopt her institutions, must calculate beforehand, to set aside the habits of independent civil life."[30] For Shadd, the degree of acculturation that Latin America would require of Black migrants would therefore delay if not entirely preclude either integration or the novel development of a Black nationality.

Also published in 1852, Martin Delany's *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* offered a more pessimistic appraisal of Canada's prospects. Like Shadd, he encouraged the Black middle class to take advantage of the British colonial government parceling cheap tracts of land in Canada as it accelerated its dispossession and consolidation of Indigenous peoples, but he nevertheless remained incredulous that these land grabs would obviate the inevitable: while cultural similarities and the "common parentage" between British North America and the United States might facilitate Black assimilation in Canada West, the colony's "manifest tendency . . . to Americanism" also indexed the likelihood of the United States annexing Canada. Although Delany may have agreed with Shadd in principle that Great Britain's strength would shield its colonies from US-American invasion, he proclaimed that, in reality, "there is not a shadow of doubt" that annexation to the United States "is the inevitable and not far distant destiny of the Canadas."[31] He reprised this claim two years later at the National Emigration Convention, arguing in his address that "according to political tendency, the Canadas—as all British America—at no very distant day, are destined to come into the United States." As the idiom of "destiny" in each of these quotes suggests, Delany viewed the United States and Canada as a sprawling Anglo-American territory fated to eventual consolidation beneath the white nationalist banner of Manifest Destiny: "The ruling

element [in Canada], as in the United States, is, and ever must be, white," he concluded, calculating that "the population now standing, in all British America, two and a half millions of whites, to but forty thousand of the black race; or sixty-one and a fraction, whites, to one black!"[32] These demographics and the enticements of transnational white supremacy unsettled any notion of the current US–Canada border's fixedness and questioned its potency as a safeguard against US-American encroachments. Canada may currently lie outside the reach of slavery, he warns, but annexation to the United States would immediately nullify the legal protections that British subjectivity guaranteed Black men and women:

> Let not colored people be deceived and gulled by any visionary argument about original rights. . . . The people can claim no rights than such as are known to exist previous to their annexation. This is manifestly the case with a large class of the former inhabitants of Mexico, who though citizens before, in the full exercise of their rights as such, so soon as the cession of the territory took place, lost them entirely, as they could claim only such as were enjoyed by the people of a similar class, in the count to which they made their union.[33]

National borders are rearrangeable constructs, and according to Delany, after the invasion of Mexico, faith that neighboring territories could repel the United States was unfounded. Mexico therefore proffered a cautionary tale for emigrationists considering Canada West: although its annexation to the United States would not legally reinstitute slavery in Canada, it would extend the border across the thousands of Black refugees from slavery, rendering them once more subject to the Fugitive Slave Law. Ultimately, to assume that current borders were even semipermanent in an era of rampant US-American expansionism would be naive, but to organize Black emigration projects predicated on the legal protections of what British subjectivity currently afforded would be a deadly underestimation of just how easily Anglo-Canadian racism could be consolidated into the white nationalism of Manifest Destiny. Canada, Delany concluded, was "no place of safety for the colored people of the United States."[34]

These debates over the current location and jurisdictional authority of the US–Canada border provide a useful overview of the stakes that Black intellectuals weighed as they considered the future of Canada, the hemisphere, and themselves. And yet these geopolitical concerns belie how these conversations were shaped by lived experiences in the Black borderlands—subjective experiences that so often fall from view in the emigrationist tracts and

convention proceedings documenting these debates. As we will see, these conversations were molded by fugitivity, opportunity, and principled disagreements that fall from view in the preceding discourses. In what follows, I discuss how Henry Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd use their own gendered experiences of border crossing to shape their emigrationist arguments and prospectuses for community-building. While their rivalry has largely been viewed as a conflict over separatism (Bibb) versus integration (Shadd), the subsequent sections will show how their assimilationist (Bibb) and feminist (Shadd) approaches to gender roles fundamentally contour their ideas regarding the ethical, economic, and political foundations of a novel Black borderlands society.

Learning "the Art of Running Away" in the Borderlands

In *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (1849), the author theorizes the Black borderlands as he navigates North American terrain variously shaped by legally meaningful yet practically permeable borders. As a kind of borderlands bildungsroman, Bibb's slave narrative details how borders' real/fictional delineations of law and space shape his development into adulthood and manhood. Experienced with *petit marronage* from the age of ten, Bibb recalls, "I learned the art of running away to perfection. I made a regular business of it, and never gave it up, until I had broken the bands of slavery, and landed myself safely in Canada, where I was regarded as a man, and not a thing."[35] Over the course of his slave narrative, Bibb endeavors six escape attempts that take him across the North-South border, the US–Indian Territory border (established by the 1830 Indian Removal Act), and the US–Canada border. Though his eventual arrival in Canada appears to afford him an opportunity to settle in place, his short years in the Detroit-Sandwich borderlands before his death in 1854 demonstrate his modulation, adaptation, and further development of what Walter Mignolo calls *border gnosis*—a hybrid form of subaltern knowledge production that emerges in border regions defined by colonial difference.[36] Indeed, the "recursive pattern of escape and return" in Bibb's slave narrative marks "a significant variation from the conventional linear pattern of escape and transformation into a free man" that ultimately produces his sensibility about and sensitivity to the potency/artifice of state/national boundaries.[37] He originally fled from Kentucky to Canada before returning to the South to retrieve his family. In route, however, he was apprehended in Kentucky. While he managed to slip his captors and cross the river to Cincinnati, though, he was once again

betrayed, arrested, and returned to Kentucky. Eventually, he and his family were sold "down the river" to Vicksburg and then New Orleans. Here, Bibb was separated from his family and sold to gamblers who carried him into Arkansas before selling him to a Cherokee man in Indian Territory. Upon his Cherokee enslaver's death, Bibb ran one last time, navigating from Indian Territory across Missouri to where the Ohio River meets the Mississippi. Traveling east against the stream, he journeyed back through Ohio and finally returned to Canada. As I argue here, one of Bibb's primary conclusions is that the multidirectional border crossings, which were essential to enslaved people's escapes and survivals, were direct consequences of slavery's cartographic and juridical regimes. The often recursive and even reversive movements ultimately necessary for self-emancipation disrupt not only the individual's journey from slavery to freedom but also the putatively linear and natural progression into manhood (in its gendered sense) that Euro-American Civilization regards as essential to citizen-subject formation.

The most significant border in Bibb's early life is the Ohio River, which separates Kentucky from free Indiana and Ohio. In a scene echoing Frederick Douglass's famous soliloquy overlooking the Chesapeake Bay in *Narrative* (1845), Bibb recounts "standing on the Ohio River bluff, looking over on a free State, and as far north as my eyes could see, I have eagerly gazed upon the blue sky of the free North, which at times constrained me to cry out from the depths of my soul, Oh! Canada, sweet land of rest—Oh! when shall I get there? Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might soar away to where there is no slavery."[38] Tellingly, his vision extends not only into Indiana across the river but ultimately (at least figuratively) to Canada. Invoking the flying African trope, he fantasizes about becoming a dove.[39] On the one hand, this fantasy draws his gaze away from the blue river currents and toward the "blue sky of the free North," the expanse of which connects the skies over Indiana and Canada, thereby designating the entirety of the land between them "the free North." On the other hand, this imagined "soaring away" to Canada suggests that simply crossing the river is insufficient to escape slavery since he could still be arrested in Indiana, recognizing its ineffective delineation between free and slave states. The Ohio River, then, is at once profoundly meaningful and meaningless as a boundary. Narrating this youthful fantasy through the jaded eyes of experience and for an antislavery audience already aware of panoramic perspectives' jagged double edges, Bibb captures the sense of both hope and limitation here: while the bluffs' elevation affords him a panorama of "the free North," it also visually exposes him to Kentucky enslavers' panoptic surveillance.[40]

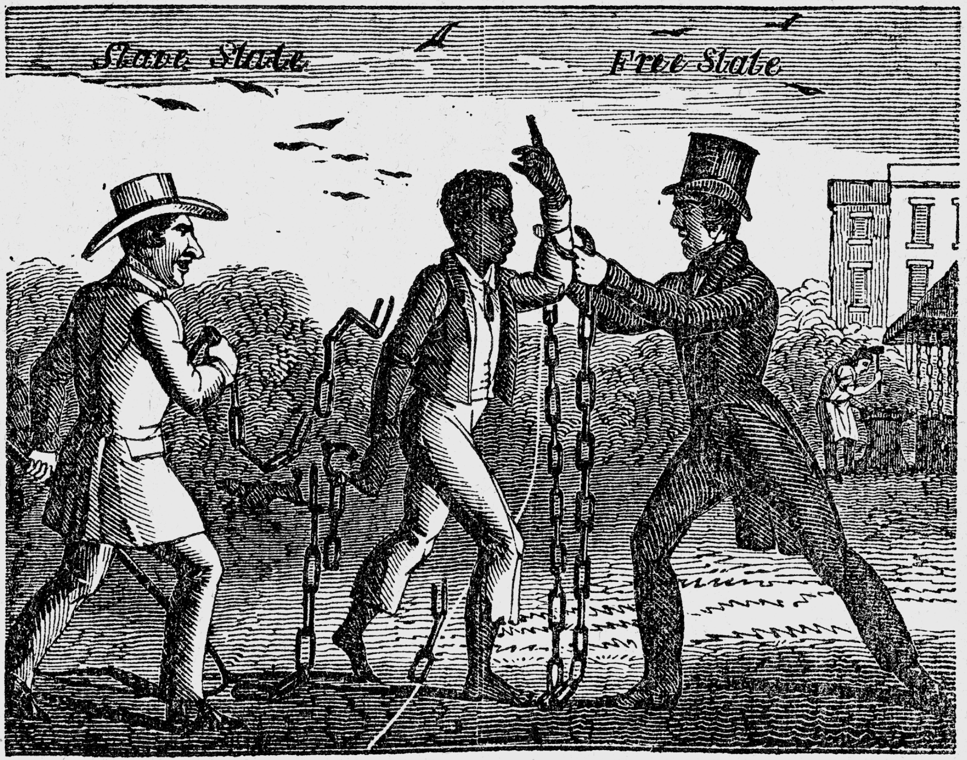


FIGURE 3.2 Henry Bibb on the border. *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (New York: Henry Bibb, 1849). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

In an inversion befitting these fuzzy delineations, his narrative's visual representation of the border upsets reliable understandings of its division of space. During one of his flights, the runaway Bibb is apprehended not upon escaping to Canada but rather upon attempting to return to Kentucky. Moreover, it is not white constables that detain him but rather "colored kidnappers" who were "getting rich by betraying fugitive slaves."[41] This double irony demonstrates that neither racial nor political boundaries reliably signal safe harbor, which Bibb visually dramatizes with a woodcut at the chapter's conclusion (figure 3.2).[42] Centered in the frame, Bibb strides defiantly from the South into the North. We know this because his left hand points to the sky—where the birds Bibb envies circle above and where the labels "Slave State" and "Free State" orient us. Bibb is arrested in motion, breaking the chains of the enslaver behind him (dressed in white) just as a "colored kidnapper" (dressed in black) manacles his raised hand with new chains. A thin white line lilts along the ground between Bibb's split stance, fading into

the white clouds and disappearing entirely into the sky where the words reveal its significance (the North-South border). The border's (in)visibility is precisely the point: though passing into the North breaks his chains, prompting several broken links to fall along the dividing line, they are immediately replaced with new chains, which, as the blacksmith hammering in the Northern background indicates, were forged in a "Free State." Unsettling the North-South border as consistently meaningful, this image insists on the continuity between these terrains.[43]

Bibb's next encounter with borders occurs during his final escape from slavery. Upon being recaptured in Ohio, Bibb is returned to Kentucky and then sold with his family "down the river" to Louisiana (the idiom here underscoring the problem with figuring rivers strictly as signs of mobility toward freedom). After two more failed escape attempts, Bibb is separated from his family and sold to a party of "sportsmen," who in turn sell him to a Cherokee man, who traffics Bibb to the Indian Territory west of Arkansas. When his Cherokee enslaver passes away, Bibb alights again, moving northward "up the boundary line, between the Indian Territory and the States of Arkansas and Missouri, and this would fetch [him] out on the Missouri river, near Jefferson City."[44] Unlike the river-carved eastern borders of Arkansas and Missouri, the literal and figurative divide between these states and the Cherokee Nation is more difficult to trace. While slavery exists on both sides of this border, Bibb dedicates an entire chapter to characterizing Cherokee slavery as "milder" than Southern slavery, and though recognizing the Cherokees' more "humane" institution of slavery, he nevertheless adopts colonialist language, characterizing his enslavers as "uneducated" and adherent to "old heathen traditional notions."[45] In adopting this lens, however, Bibb reveals the boundary's potency: like white US-Americans, he perceives Indian Territory as an "uncivilized," "lawless," and "dangerous" frontier. He recalls that he "had doubtless gone through great peril in crossing the Indian territory," noting that "the various half civilized tribes" in the region were "almost invariably" armed with "bows and arrows, tomahawks, guns, butcher knives and all the various implements of death which are used by them."[46] Bibb's anxieties as a refugee in Indian Territory expose a gap between the United States' expansionist ambitions and the lived experiences of US-Americans charged with settling stolen Indigenous land. This distinction reveals to Bibb yet another dimension of the borderlands: the cognitive dissonance between governmental conceptualizations of political boundaries and the lived experiences of those residing along the dividing lines. In registering Indigenous rights to defend themselves against treaty viola-

tions and imperial impositions, Bibb not only realizes the potential for nations outside the United States to enforce their borders but also extrapolates his own fears in traversing Cherokee land into a broader disquietude among US-Americans deputized to endeavor the labor of expansionism, inferring that most were reluctant (at best) to subject their own families to the misery and violence of "becoming colonial."[47]

When he finally arrives in Ohio once again, Bibb has left the South for good. Though his many border crossings have trained him in the geospatial and conceptual topographies of borderlands, his final chapters underscore that the primary motivation for his peregrinations was the singular pursuit of his wife and daughter. Bibb's repeated self-imperilment and audacious attempts to rescue his family structure the story, both narratively and morally. As Ronda Henry Anthony shows, slavery's barring of Black men from "the same rights and privileges that white fathers and husbands enjoy" contours both the plot and the aesthetics of Bibb's slave narrative, which he designs as a moral argument for Black men's access to "certain traditional, patriarchal, heterosexist ideological structures of manhood."[48] Much like how Linda Brent preemptively apologizes for her sexual liaison with Mr. Sands in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Henry Bibb concludes his narrative by describing how slavery circumscribed his ability to act as a father and a husband. Whereas Jacobs anticipates misogynist volleys against her moral character by explaining how slavery's sexual power dynamics proscribe even the most careful Black woman from adhering to the tenets of true womanhood, Bibb proleptically addresses accusations that he abdicated his duties as a husband and father "in an attempt to prepare his reading audience for his eventual divorce from his slave wife."[49]

This tension is palpable when Bibb travels "against the advice of all [his] friends" along the Ohio River from Cincinnati to Madison, Indiana, in search of information about his wife. Upon arriving in the latter border city (just ten miles from his enslaver's plantation), however, he learns that his wife had remained in Louisiana, "living in a state of adultery with her master . . . for the last three years."[50] The revelation devastates Bibb, whose painful reflections on the matter amount to a speech act of divorce: "After all the sacrifices, sufferings, and risks which I had run, striving to rescue her from the grasp of slavery; every prospect and hope was cut off. She has ever since been regarded as theoretically and practically dead to me as a wife, for she was living in a state of adultery, according to the law of God and man."[51] Although "not having been sanctioned by any legal power, [the marriage] cannot be cancelled by a legal process," Bibb nevertheless appeals to "the law of God

and man" in justifying this annulment, which was only permissible under circumstances of infidelity ("adultery") or death ("theoretically and practically dead to me as a wife"). Moreover, by blaming Malinda for the marriage's failure, Bibb tacitly exonerates himself. He summarizes the "sacrifices, sufferings, and risks" he endured to save her as evidence of his extraordinary commitments to the marriage and to his family, but implicitly impugns Malinda's reciprocation in the process. Beyond repeating the morally damning diction of "adultery," Bibb's revealing phrase "theoretically and practically dead to me" harks back to their final meeting. In the heart-wrenching scene of separation, he describes the deacon ferociously whipping Malinda, who was "weeping over the loss of her departed husband, who was then, by the hellish laws of slavery, to her, theoretically and practically dead."[52] Planting this phrase earlier assuages the shock of Bibb's later use—whatever callousness we might attribute to him is merely a mirroring of the disposition Malinda had already adopted toward him. He reinforces this claim with a "word in conclusion" on Malinda, characterizing their marital commitments as "voluntarily assumed without law mutually" only to be "by her relinquished years ago without my knowledge."[53]

Bibb meticulously prefaces his marriage's dissolution for twin purposes. First, he concertedly displaces blame from himself to reaffirm his moral integrity. Notably, this chapter of *Narrative* also details his courtship with Boston activist and schoolteacher Mary Miles, culminating in their 1848 marriage "not in slaveholding style, which is a mere farce, without the sanction of law or gospel; but in accordance with the laws of God and our country."[54] Presciently anticipating stereotypes of Black men as absentee fathers (codified most egregiously and impactfully a century later in the 1965 Moynihan Report), Bibb must declare his first marriage not only "theoretically and practically dead" but also exempted from the legal procedures of formal divorce since it was never legally authorized in the first place. This maneuver enables him to parry accusations of bigamy, promiscuity, or recklessly repudiating his marital obligations. Second, Bibb underscores just how narrowly the gendered roles of husband/father and wife/mother can be practiced within a moral, social, and economic institution that *ungenders* the enslaved.[55] Even as his self-exoneration implicitly blames Malinda for the marriage disbanding, Bibb nevertheless contextualizes her actions within the well-documented sexual power structures of slavery. Despite his repeated allusions to adultery, for example, he claims to "bring no charge of guilt against her" and evinces an understanding that "it is consistent with slavery, however, to suppose that she became reconciled to it" either because it pro-

tected her and her child ("she was much better treated than she had ever been before") or because of Stockholm syndrome ("there might have been some kind of attachment formed by living together in this way for years").[56] He even admits the near impossibility of an enslaved woman remaining "true to her husband contrary to the will of her master" or avoiding being "reduced to a state of adultery at the will of her master."[57]

Although Bibb focuses here on slavery's negation of white bourgeois formulations of *wife* for enslaved Black women, his main anxiety is enslaved Black men's access to the corresponding formulations of father/husband.[58] In his psychoanalytic study of Black masculinity, Maurice Wallace argues that the autobiographies of formerly enslaved "bastard/mulatto" men like Bibb "fashion nonoedipal dramas of slavery which reveal nuclear relations as a less significant matter to the slavocracy than the bourgeois imperatives of ownership, dominance, commodity, and (re)production."[59] Connecting two famous scenes from Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* (Captain Anthony's beating/rape of Aunt Hester and Douglass's violent self-defense against Covey), Wallace surfaces a libidinal subtext in which "the juvenile persona created by Douglass to record his early life seems hurried to differentiate himself, to counter his own 'feminine' self-representation in the projected passivity of Hester, and to prove the phallic perfectibility of black men."[60] If Douglass must disavow "feminine" passivity through a physical articulation of his masculinity against the white patriarchy (symbolized by Covey), then Bibb disavows his own anxieties of emasculation through a moral articulation of Black masculinity against the white patriarchy: unlike the lecherous white enslaver who coerces Malinda into concubinage, Bibb diligently adheres to the white bourgeois ideals of masculinity. This double move resembles the paradigmatic "incongruity" that P. Gabrielle Foreman traces in Black women's sentimental writing, simultaneously bespeaking "encomiums to white [manhood] under an economy of supposed moral and literary mimesis and a skewering indictment of the political economy of white [male] desire."[61] Instead of a cuckhold rendered impotent (feminine, passive) by the sexual dominance of a virile white man or a coward rendered impotent (feminine, passive) by a fear of confronting the white man enslaving his wife, Bibb narrates himself as a morally righteous, unflaggingly faithful father and husband. For Bibb, this leads to a profound revelation: his unyielding dedication to Malinda and his fidelity to the white bourgeois ideal of father/husband "fetters" him precisely because the literal fetters constraining him and his family restrict his capacity to perform those roles successfully. It is only by "breaking out of bondage" both literally (slavery)

and figuratively ("slavish" devotion to structurally unattainable gender ideals) that Bibb believes that men and women can achieve the gender roles and type of marriage to which he aspires.

To do so, he must geographically remove himself from the ambit of slavery. To that end, he frames his second marriage as an attempt to practice his fatherly and husbandly duties in a "free country" where the United States' white heteropatriarchy has not curtailed the possibilities of Black masculinity.[62] When Bibb introduces readers to Mary, for example, he presents her as "what a poor slave's wife can never be to her husband while in the condition of a slave," and the catalog of her attractive qualities juxtaposes her with Malinda: Mary's "activity and devotion" to antislavery distinguishes her from Malinda becoming "reconciled" to slavery after Bibb's final flight, while Mary's "moral principle, and frankness of disposition, which is often sought for but seldom found," can only be read as a referendum on Malinda.[63] The "free North" (including the United States and Canada) affords Mary, a freeborn activist of "talents and learning," fecund territory to grow into a wife consistent with the white bourgeois gender roles to which Bibb subscribes ("a bosom friend, a help-meet, a loving companion in all the social, moral, and religious relations of life").[64] Notably, though, Bibb does not attribute his own gendered liberation to his successful escape to the free North but rather to the process that effectuated that eventual liberation: it is only "after living alone in the world for more than eight years without a companion known in law or morals" that Bibb "changed [his] condition."[65] Much like his experiences as a refugee reveal to him how political borders contain or constrain slavery/freedom, this eight-year course of liberation instructed him in how those borders structure gender and marriage—and how those roles might be expanded or remade in the borderlands.

Voice of the Fugitive and Bibb's Black Patriarchy

Having learned "the art of running away," Bibb comes to view the borders separating slave states from free states not as meaningful delineations in and of themselves but rather as a model for how to conceptualize Northern states as part of the borderlands extending southward from a more meaningful geopolitical delineation: the US–Canada border. Put differently, if slavery—as a law and an ideology—governed the North–South borderlands in the divided United States, then the more progressive and inclusive postslavery institutions of Canada might come to govern the US–Canada borderlands.

At the same time, when Bibb eventually moved his family to Sandwich, Canada West in late 1850, he nevertheless appreciated the dual nature of this border. On the one hand, Canada provided sanctuary from the Fugitive Slave Law, to which he remained legally subject as a self-emancipated man. On the other hand, the literal and figurative fluidity of the Detroit River dividing Michigan from Canada West allowed Bibb to exert a continued political influence on the United States from the safety and proximity of Canada. To help the putative liberty and equality of Canada West flow southward into the United States, for example, Bibb strengthened abolitionist social networks in the borderlands with lecture tours through Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and New York in the early 1850s. In light of such dynamics, Afua Cooper characterizes the Great Lakes and the Detroit River as a *fluid frontier*: "Malleable and porous, even though sovereign states on either side sought to maintain and control the land under their jurisdiction," these marine borders metaphorize "the shifting and multiple nature of identities, which are constantly negotiated in border zones."[66] As uneasy delineations of territory, these waterways expose how even "natural borders"—where fluvial formations become concomitant with political borders—are "unnatural boundaries," in which national demarcations ("unnatural" human constructs) bisect ecological ("natural") bioregions that form around water. The Detroit River proves an especially apt example because of its latitudinal arrangement: Sandwich is actually south of Detroit, immediately troubling border-induced binaries like north–south and facilitating the further unsettlement of naturalized boundaries, including not only national divides but also—as we will see—gender and race.[67]

After settling in Canada, Bibb founded the colony's first Black newspaper, through which he developed, circulated, and implemented practical outcomes for his border gnosis. As if anticipating Rinaldo Walcott's claim that "marginality is the place from which Blackness must speak," Bibb titled his borderlands periodical *Voice of the Fugitive* (1851–54), asserting its capacity to speak for Black refugees from slavery residing in Canada, even as its material production and distribution symbolized the tethered nature of those same individuals to communities in both territories.[68] As a polyvocal platform guided by Bibb's ideology, the newspaper both relies on and reflects the borderlands as a pressurized environment for reimagining Black community in North America. Because of the region's overlaid national, imperial, colonial, and cultural interests, writer-activists in the Black borderlands could draw selectively on useful dimensions of British, US-American, and African American georacial thinking.

Among the prominent Black activists who made up *Voice of the Fugitive* was a "voluntary correspondent" from Vermont: twenty-one-year-old James Theodore Holly. While Holly is most renowned for his missionary-emigrationist labors in Haiti, his writings to the paper so impressed Bibb that he was hired as a local agent and eventually relocated to Canada to be a coeditor. In Holly's early unsolicited letter, Bibb recognized a talented ally who could eloquently articulate the opportunity that their displacement actually afforded Black refugees and migrants in Canada West. Holly takes an approach that would come to define *Voice of the Fugitive*, enumerating the overlapping political systems that collided in the Black borderlands and distilling the utilitarian approach of recombining useful elements from each to shape Black political philosophy and community-building in the region:

> History attests that emigration and settlement beyond the operation of political disabilities, are the great means, by which an oppressed people become renovated. It is the regenerative power of baptism, politically, to a denationalized people. This last idea brings me to the consideration of another suggestion. You Canadian colonists who have thus been forced from the course of an unjust political oppression, second only to the curse entailed upon the human race at the fall of Adam, owe a political evangelization to your brethren for their redemption from under the bonds of this curse, commensurate with the liberty you now enjoy as British subjects. There is no time more expedient, no place more proper, and no persons more suitable than the Canadian refugees, to *immediately* organize in their *settlement*, to facilitate the *escape* and comfortable settlement of more refugees in Canada, and for that to establish co-operating agents, throughout the civilized world. Let the moral, pecuniary, and if needs be the physical means of an extended and powerful *foreign influence* be concentrated to crush the infernal institution of American slavery—You can do this. You are now disenthralled by a political regeneration. The colored people in the United States cannot; the vain attempts at an *effective* national organization amongst us, for the last twenty years proves this.[69]

While Holly makes a practical case for mass emigration, he also identifies the energy endemic to the US–Canada borderlands as uniquely suited to "regenerating" a displaced people, a project which he claims "the colored people in the United States cannot" effectuate at home. He recognizes, in other words, what Walcott describes as the potentialities available because

of "how porous the Canada–United States border remains for diasporic Blacks and what kinds of political identifications and relationships are possible."[70] Holly's diction here—that Black Canadian settlements are "disenthralled"—suggests that the possibilities occasioned by emancipation from "American slavery" and by physical and ideological distancing from the United States (which remained more invested in the economic outcomes of racial capitalism than in its foundational egalitarian ideals) are mutually constitutive. Moreover, his contention that Black organizing in Canada could foster "an extended and powerful *foreign influence*" overidentifies African American alienation in the United States not only as always already foreign within an ideologically white nation but also as merging with (and benefiting from) existing foreign influences, specifically British efforts to curtail US-American expansionism. Even as he recognizes the utility in affiliating with the British Empire currently governing Canada, however, Holly deliberately avoids the ingenuous optimism about the British capacity to repel US-American expansionism and the "compulsive patternings and devotional respects" that Elisa Tamarkin calls "Black Anglophilia."[71] He refuses to promote a popular mode of political realignment among Black North Americans: abnegating US-American identity in favor of an emancipation-aligned British cultural identity. Instead, he disidentifies with both national identities to characterize Black refugees/emigrants as "denationalized" people and "Canadian colonists." This disidentification yields an implied analogy in which Black settlements in Canada's frontiers restage the British colonization of North America: just as persecuted pilgrims fled religious oppression to build a new society in the seventeenth century, Black refugees/emigrants would correspondingly flee racial oppression. Moreover, the emphasis on "denationalization" unveils a further dimension of the analogy: just as British settler-colonists in North America eventually decolonized to form the United States, Black "Canadian colonists" might also decolonize from that same empire as Great Britain began neglecting its incrementally less lucrative American colonies. By simultaneously identifying as legally unenslavable British subjects and espousing the unrealized ideals of US-American republicanism, Black "Canadian colonists," Holly suggests, could not only develop a sustainable community in Canada but also leverage that political power to end US-American slavery from without. The liminality here is essential. Unlike the 1770s or 1812, when the British vehemently defended their North American colonies, their abolition of slavery in the Caribbean (1834) and the United States' growing military and economic formidability recalibrated their policy positions. With the requisite transition to wage

labor and opportunities for extractive capitalism emerging in Africa and Asia, British neglect of its Caribbean colonies left that region "abandoned to a world system that was mostly indifferent to the question of whose flag flew over the islands' government houses."[72] By embracing "denationalization" as a mode of relation to empire, Black settlers in Canada might also embrace these conditions of possibility: the British posture toward Canada afforded protections and relative autonomy for the cultivation of Black communities. Such possibilities owed not only to the geographic and cultural hybridity of the Black borderlands but also to the temporal liminality of Canada between coloniality and independence. In the decades before and after confederation (1867), Canadian nationalism began to crystallize, consolidating layered colonial histories and allegiances into a venture of "modern Canadian nation building [that] was always imagined in racial terms."[73] Canadian nationalism, in other words, became defined by whiteness, exemplified in this period by the state-sanctioned deracination of Indigenous people, exclusionary anti-Asian immigration legislation, and the growing denial of a Black Canadian historical presence. But before Canadianness became coextensive with whiteness and before the corresponding erasure of Afro-Canadians from the region's history, Holly recognized the potential to center Blackness in these burgeoning discourses of nascent Canadian nationalism. Able to situate themselves within and without experiences of both US-American and British subjectivities, then, Black emigrants/refugees were uniquely positioned to imagine cultural and political formations that asserted the distinctiveness of Canada, since their own freedom could be uniquely articulated and enacted there.

In addition to providing a pressurized environment for individual and collective reinvention, *Voice of the Fugitive* presented the culturally pluralistic Black borderlands as an opportunity to form communities in which the white bourgeois ideals of gender from which slavery systematically barred Black men and women in the United States could finally be accessed. For example, Bibb's paper actively promoted his vision for the Refugee Home Society (RHS)—a philanthropic organization that financially sustained, residentially organized, and morally guided self-emancipated settlers. First conceived in 1851, the RHS aspired to build a Black community by purchasing land tracts from the Canadian government and then parceling affordable plots for refugees on the condition that they accede to community values. This arrangement, however, belies its philanthropy—it was also gatekeeping. Because landownership was a requirement for the elective franchise in Canada, the RHS's conditions regarding real estate sales functionally governed ac-

cess to voting rights. Rather than offering refugees from slavery an instantaneous metamorphosis from property to personhood, the RHS enforced morality standards that policed the only viable path from slavery to citizenship for the most economically disadvantaged migrants. These criteria for purchasing land—including commitments to Protestantism, temperance, industry, and education—largely aligned with the white bourgeois ideals toward which Bibb was constantly striving in his autobiography, especially the roles of "husband" and "father" from which slavery structurally precluded Black men in the United States.[74] By unilaterally imposing respectability politics on the unnetworked and indigent refugees in desperate need of the organization's philanthropic aid, Bibb established the RHS and himself as the effective arbiters of what Black citizenship in Canada should, and indeed *could*, look like.

Whether or not Bibb understood himself as a benevolent patriarch of a millennial Black nation, his tireless organizing and his administration of Canada's first—and for a brief time *only*—Black newspaper quickly solidified him as the undeniable leader of the refugee/migrant community.[75] His protégé, Holly, certainly regarded him as such and propagated that mythology in the paper. Praising Bibb's "noble project" of establishing an "asylum of the refugee" and a "primitive community" where Black settler-colonists "might lay the foundation of their own future greatness," Holly elevates Bibb's work to biblical proportions: "We should vigorously pursue this project, and swarm in a ceaseless tide to Canada West, and hang like an ominous *black cloud* over this guilty nation, until the precipitated occurrence of providential circumstances—the terrible thunderbolts of Omnipotent judgment hurled from the hand of Jehovah, shall scale the Alleghany summits, and reverberate through the valley of the Mississippi, breaking every chain and letting the oppressed go free."[76] Whereas Bibb revered "the blue sky of the free North" in his slave narrative, Holly conjures a "*black cloud*" into that atmosphere. But rather than overcasting Bibb's sunny optimism about the transnational terrain of freedom that might extend southward from Canada, Holly conveys a more ominous hope, forecasting divine justice in the apocalyptic rhetorical tradition of David Walker and Nat Turner.[77] Complementing this celestial imagery, Holly adds similarly biblical fluvial imagery. "Precipitated," for instance, signifies both religiously (providential causation) and meteorologically (rain), naming a divine deluge that crests in a wave of Black emigration flowing northward (a "ceaseless tide"). But as the tidal diction suggests, this diluvial metaphor relies on ebbs and flows, not simply the unidirectional (northbound) traffic of Black migrants.

In this new flood, "omnipotent judgment" will rain "terrible thunderbolts" over "the Allegheny summits" in western Pennsylvania and then "reverberate through the valley," where the Alleghany River connects to the Ohio River, which itself connects to the Mississippi River (major aquatic routes for both the southbound trafficking of enslaved people and the northbound route of self-emancipated people navigating toward freedom). This conflation of different storm elements adheres to a coherent meteoro-logic (both thunder and rain are contained within the "*black cloud*") that bespeaks a synesthetic syllogism: a flood pours over the land like thunder echoes through the air.

Moreover, the multidirectional movements of people, power, and freedom further elaborate the metaphor's meanings. As the southward ebb to the northward flow of Black emigrants, justice will rain down on the United States for the sins of slavery, not only vertically from Heaven but cartographically from Canada. This analogy relieves the sonic dimension of Holly's diluvial metaphor: just as Noah heeds God's call to build an ark and save life on earth, "when another National Convention of our people shall assemble from all the free states," Holly prophesies, "it will be in obedience to a call emanating through the 'Voice of the Fugitive.'" In an almost blasphemous comparison, then, Holly's framing of Black Canada as "the head and centre of all our future efforts" likens Bibb's "chief central authority in Canada West" to Noah's divinely appointed authority. Furthermore, it likens the "auxiliary cooperation" of "state and local associations, thro'out all of the free states" to the literal and figurative sons of Noah, who heeded their father and then, after the Flood, heeded God's instruction to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth."[78] This new flood casts Bibb not only as a prophetic agent of salvation whose RHS offered literal and figurative shelter from the apocalyptic wrath of God but also as an antediluvian patriarch, whose wisdom and guidance would direct the development of postdiluvian (post-slavery) society in North America.

Holly's conceit therefore returns us to the question of masculinity that is so critical to Bibb's *Narrative*. If, as discussed in the previous section, Bibb sought to envision and practice a mode of masculinity unavailable within the gendered regimes of slavery, then the flood imagery finally enables its articulation. As a reversal of the Creation, the Flood occasions a new beginning. Restaged in the antebellum period, the metaphorical new flood Holly prophesies signifies a punitive, providential purge responding to the sin of slavery. As the hinge between the antediluvian and postdiluvian epochs, Noah and his covenant with God shape the world to come. By corollary, Bibb—a self-emancipated refugee turned newspaper proprietor and community

organizer—bridges the spatiotemporal worlds of slavery (United States/past) and freedom (Canada/future), superseding the corrupted patriarchal order of the former with a new patriarchal order: if slavery rendered the bourgeois ideals of masculinity unavailable to Black men and tempted white men into the adulteration of those ideals, then Bibb would carry forth those ideals into a new postdiluvian era of freedom, in which he could help Black men actually attain those ideals. Ultimately, Holly viewed Bibb (a mentor fourteen years his senior) not only as a father figure but also as a founding father of Black Canada—a patriarchal progenitor of Canaan in both biblical senses.

A Woman's Place

As Bibb began amassing support in the US-Canada borderlands, he was no doubt delighted when Mary Ann Shadd—a twenty-eight-year-old schoolteacher and antislavery activist—arrived from Pennsylvania. The two first met in fall 1851, when Shadd's father was a delegate to the North American Convention in Toronto. Energized by the convention culture she witnessed (and then joined as elected secretary for an emigrationist meeting in Buffalo a few days later), Shadd relocated to Canada West with her brother soon after. Upon her arrival, Henry and Mary Bibb toured her through Sandwich, but she ultimately settled in Windsor, a multiracial riverside community just a few miles north. There, she founded an integrated school at the prompting of locals and with financial support from the American Missionary Association (AMA).

Despite the Bibbs' efforts to recruit Shadd as an ally, she emerged as a formidable adversary who unapologetically challenged Henry's patriarchal primacy in Black Canada and sharply criticized the RHS. Their disputes—well-documented in both Bibb's *Voice of the Fugitive* and Shadd's *Provincial Freeman*—coalesced around two issues. First, the Bibbs argued that Black children should be educated in separate schools so that educators could address their particular needs, while Shadd believed that integrated schools would accelerate Black transculturation with Canadian society and more rapidly erode anti-Black prejudice. Second, the Bibbs defended the RHS's fundraising tactics as a necessary evil for building social, moral, and economic infrastructure, but Shadd condemned their solicitations as a form of "begging" that was not only demeaning to individuals and damaging to the image of Black refugees/migrants in Canada but also fundamentally incompatible with the ethic of Black self-sufficiency.[79]

These principled ideological differences were aggravated by competition over finite financial resources in a zero-sum economy of readers, subscribers, and white philanthropists. "The fragility of black literary communities in unexpected places" that Eric Gardner describes was even more acute in Canada, where the stresses of operating a niche Black newspaper were aggravated by both material and demographic conditions.[80] Ironically, many of the "fugitives" for whom *Voice of the Fugitive* claimed to speak could not themselves afford to support the paper, and as the existence of only a single Canadian antislavery paper (Toronto's *Globe*) demonstrated, the readership that sustained myriad abolitionist publications and three Black newspapers in the United States in this era was lacking in Canada.[81] When Shadd published the first issue of the *Provincial Freeman* in March 1853, then, she struggled to attract subscribers, and it would be a year before she published a second issue.[82] These material concerns, however, were ultimately secondary to a more basic conflict. The Bibbs were the nominal first family of Black Canada, and when Shadd refused to fall in line, they and their supporters "were equally disturbed by Mary Ann's independence and her refusal to be submissive to Canada's more established black, male leadership."[83] The gendered nature of this dispute is paramount. Even before Shadd challenged *Voice of the Fugitive*'s information monopoly by launching her own paper, the Bibb's periodical published the AMA funds Shadd received for her school, insinuating that she was scamming a second salary while affecting destitution. Beyond deliberately embarrassing Shadd, the exposé implicitly encouraged impoverished parents to stop paying tuition, which would eliminate her actual salary and foreclose her school. Recognizing the social pressures to play nice in what Jane Rhodes characterizes as an uncharacteristic "moment of conciliation, [Shadd] offered to let the Bibbs have the Windsor field of operations." Within two years, Mary Bibb was operating her own school in Windsor, confirming Shadd's initial suspicions that "Mrs. Bibb, who was also a teacher, had designs on [Shadd's] school in Windsor once it became viable," and Shadd had relocated to Toronto, where she resumed production of the *Provincial Freeman*.[84] While this may seem like a concession or a retreat on Shadd's part, she vehemently defended herself against these accusations of financial impropriety by publicly naming the Bibbs' weaponization of their paper to dress down their competitor. In response to Shadd's counterpunches, *Voice of the Fugitive* half-heartedly apologized for its hit piece with a classic "we understand, that there was an offence taken . . . where there was none intended by us." Rewriting the calculated character assassination as unadorned reporting ("our business is to give the news") and fur-

ther implying that Shadd was being cagey about her income ("not knowing that she wished this information kept from the parents of the children"), the rebuttal performatively feigned incredulity at Shadd's righteous anger, which they derided as "add[ing] nothing to her credit as a lady."[85] The Bibbs tell on themselves here: for all her critiques of the RHS, the Bibbs' own bookkeeping, and their separatist philosophy, Shadd's most unforgivable sin was her public defiance of the deference the Bibbs (especially Henry) believed they had earned among the Black community in Canada and the gendered acquiescence to "true womanhood" that their community-building project in the region demanded.

By highlighting the role of gender in their disputes over money, education, and information, I want to suggest that these arguments were in some sense proxies for their ideological disagreements about gender roles in Black community-building in Canada. Shadd's ire for the Bibbs was exacerbated by her view of the couple as a caricature of unwavering dedication to heteronormativity and separate spheres ideology. This perspective explains Shadd's more acute contempt for Mary and her (somewhat) more forgiving disposition toward Henry. As Rhodes posits, Shadd, like many modern scholars, "suspected Mary Bibb of being the actual author of the damaging articles in *The Voice* since she considered Henry Bibb to be barely literate and his wife to be the controlling influence of his life."[86] Beyond political disagreement and personal rancor for the couple, Shadd's resentment here was no doubt inflamed by her impression that a brilliant woman like Mary was propping up her husband as the movement's figurehead out of devotion to the cult of domesticity.[87] In other words, the Bibbs believed that Canada would allow Black men and women access to the bourgeois gender roles that slavery had denied them and that most viewed as foundational to cultivating a "civilized" society. But, as Shadd recognized, Mary Bibb's fealty to the cult of domesticity, bolstering of her husband, and policing of Shadd's own womanhood were painful reminders that Black access to these coveted gender roles would reproduce a society that remained deeply patriarchal. This recognition brings into relief Shadd's rejection of the Bibbs' separatist philosophy for Black community-building in Canada, which risked mimetically reproducing patriarchal social structures in its striving to attain the previously unavailable gender roles of the white bourgeoisie in the United States. Instead, her integrationist approach to racial uplift disidentifies with the unsettled possibilities of Canada's colonial situation between the British and US-American Empires. She ultimately suggests that liberationist feminism's capacity to transcend racial boundaries might catalyze more profound

transformations of (overwhelmingly white) Canadian society than the insular Black uplift programs the Bibbs endorsed.

Shadd's biography provides useful context here, as it indexes how border crossings informed her innovation and improvisation of new gender roles in the Black borderlands. Although late marriages, relocation for better opportunities, and relative financial independence were not uncommon among Black women who taught in the United States, Shadd's move to Canada occasioned a series of radical (for the time) performances of femininity, wifehood, and motherhood.[88] She married Thomas Cary in 1856 with little fanfare at the age of thirty-two, and "within days of her marriage [she] was traveling in her endless quest to find financial sustenance for the paper," including a lengthy fundraising and lecture tour in the United States with another man (one of the paper's new owners, H. Ford Douglas).[89] It would be months before Shadd began printing her name as "Mary Ann Shadd Cary" in her paper. The couple lived apart for several years, maintaining separate activist careers until Thomas's death in 1860. While her marriage was certainly unconventional in these regards, Shadd's parenting was even more transgressive against the tenets of "true womanhood." Her husband had three children from a previous marriage, and the couple would have two children of their own during their brief marriage. The children were largely reared by her sister Sarah during her Canadian years, while she traveled, lectured, and edited the *Provincial Freeman*.[90] More than simply expanding the range of acceptable gender performances, Shadd's life exploded the paradigm of separate spheres and the cult of domesticity. In redefining womanhood for herself and by extension, for other Black women in the borderlands, Shadd contests patriarchal ideology in Black Canada in two ways: forging space for women in masculine-coded realms (politics, agriculture, commerce) and elevating the political work of feminine-coded labor.[91] To her, the development of a new society among Black refugees and migrants in Canada enabled the dismantling of the narrow gender roles that other (male) Black nationalists simply aspired to reinscribe there.

The liminal setting and colonial context of Canada West encouraged such redefinitions. The small rural communities that Black refugees and migrants founded in the early nineteenth century were "dusty hamlets on the edge of the Canadian frontier," lending themselves easily to the millennialist frontier mythologies taking root in the US-American consciousness during the era of rampant westward expansion.[92] The romance of frontier agrarianism regenerating Civilization not only fueled the conceptualization of North America as a terra nullius in need of cultivation and the violent expropria-

tion of that land from Indigenous people who were not exploiting its capitalist potential but also infused the ethics of radical individualism, bootstrap entrepreneurship, and white supremacy into national mythology and US-American identity. The frontier, simply put, was a place where labor enabled individuals to perfect themselves and thereby perfect the nation.[93] Situated strategically beyond the ambit of the Fugitive Slave Law but nevertheless proximate to the philanthropic and activist networks that would sustain refugees and emigrants fleeing the United States, the Black settlements of Canada West were similarly captivated by this mythos.

Because the region's frontier geography required building social institutions (churches, schools, marketplaces) from the ground up, Shadd could disidentify with frontier mythology in ways that enabled a fundamental reimagining of those institutions not beholden to US-American ideological baggage. In the *Provincial Freeman*, for example, Shadd uplifted narratives that documented how the frontier necessitated women's participation in the masculine-coded labor of making space for the Black communities to come. The harsh realities of frontier life (clearing land, cultivating crops, hunting, erecting structures) often required women to perform jobs usually reserved for and assigned to men, as documented in the experiences of Mary Jane Robinson, a Black migrant in Buxton that the *Provincial Freeman* profiles. In a letter to a friend back in New York, she describes her transformation from an urban laundress into "quite a country-woman" whose new domestic occupations entailed physical outdoor labor, including work tied not only to the kitchen (churning butter and milking cows) but also to the fields (cultivating tobacco). This conversion (and Robinson's effusive pride throughout her new self-portrait) encapsulates the radical potential that more pliable gender roles occasioned in this milieu. Not only did frontier labor facilitate women's access to "democratic discourses promoting the 'dignity of labor'" as a hallmark of republicanism, but as Xiomara Santamarina argues, it "could also evoke the potential contradictions at play in the discourses of a transforming economy that continually reorganized—rather than did away with—forms of social hierarchy along lines of middle-class race and gender norms."[94]

These feminist potentialities, however, were not limited to the physical frontier or to physical labor. Significantly, Shadd's own work in the masculine-coded public spheres of newspaper editing, political activism, and public speaking routinely exposed the double-edge of these new possibilities: if the erosion of traditional gender roles in frontier contexts occasioned opportunities to improvise nontraditional performances of gender, it also prompted anxieties about the need to reconstitute separate spheres

and—as we will see—a corresponding conservative backlash.[95] Indeed, though letters to the editor of the *Provincial Freeman* were frequently addressed to "Mr. Freeman" and "Mr. Editor" when Samuel Ringgold Ward was listed as editor (as a ruse strategically hiding Shadd's leadership), the paper still received similarly directed correspondence *after* Shadd openly took credit for her labors. As late as 1857, when the paper lists "Mary A. S. Cary, H. F. Douglass [sic], and L. D. Shadd" as its editors (only her name is not initialed, as if to underscore the gendered difference), Stephen Shorts wrote to "Mr. Editor" to complain about the *Provincial Freeman*'s seemingly classist indifference toward impoverished Black settler-colonists. Shadd penned a withering response and signed it "M.A.S.C.," unambiguously signaling which of the three editors—the woman—replied. Notably, her retort repeats the universal masculine ("man" for "human") to a deliberately performative extent, functioning both sincerely and ironically to emphasize her own participation in these masculinist spheres and highlighting her erasure when addressed as "Mr. Editor."[96]

Shadd's many public appearances as an emigrationist in both the United States and Canada also challenged the rigid gendering of public and private spheres. Contemporary accounts of her speeches reveal the disquieting effects that her occupation of masculine spaces had on men, whose commentaries grapple in revealing ways with the cognitive dissonance of her positionality in the public arena. Wisconsin's *Elkhorn Independent* covered a speech from her postnuptial lecture tour with Douglas. The reporter dedicates several sentences to Shadd, while remarking only briefly that Douglas was "extremely musical and eloquent, and his efforts gave universal satisfaction." Although the account argues that her feminine-coded affect ("nervous, hurried") detracted from her success, it also praises her facility in the masculine-coded realm of reason ("original ideas and soundest logic"), all before adding a gendered qualification to its most glowing approbation: "She is a woman of superior intellect, of high literary cultivation, and of the most persevering energy of character." Tellingly, though, the reportage concludes by consolidating its praise under reassurances that "her manner is modest, and in strict keeping with the popular notions of the 'sphere of women,'" lest her successes in the "sphere of men" intimate any transgression of gender norms.[97] In fact, it implies that her presence there is contingent on her "strict keeping" and reproduction of those norms.

Other audiences were even more unnerved by her conduct or even her mere presence. After one of Shadd's most famous public appearances—the 1855 Colored National Convention in Philadelphia—the *British Banner*

remarked superciliously that "great men . . . are not always wise; and Mr. [Frederick] DOUGLASS himself supplied an example, in advocating the Motion, that '*Miss* SHADD' should be elected a member."[98] Although their justification amounts to overt sexism, I quote it here for the underlying concerns it reveals: "Such Conferences are not the place for woman, whose province is ample enough for all her energies of mind and heart—energies alike powerful and precious in the appropriate field; but that field is not the arena of discussion and debate. Had 'Miss SHADD' not had in her bosom more of the male than of the female heart, she would have felt ashamed of her position, and hastened to hide herself amid the soft obscurities of her own sex."[99] As Cynthia Lee Patterson argues, women activists who lectured publicly in this era frequently aggravated "cultural anxieties about changing gender roles" and the "loss of male control over the actions of women in the public sphere." Misogynist backlash often attended to these speakers' "ambiguously sexed bodies" to refract the gendered transgressions of women lecturing through more sensationalist reportage of sexual criminality and medical discourses of "monstrous" bodies, especially the "cultural construction of the female hermaphrodite."[100] In a move distressingly familiar to modern readers, in other words, sexist appraisals of women transgressing traditional gender roles manifest in transphobic speculations about her embodiment. The *Banner*'s coverage exemplifies these anxieties. The repeated references to "*Miss* SHADD" in quotations marks—an orthographic eccentricity the article extends to no other person—insinuate that she is not *actually* a woman. On the one hand, this implication bespeaks a surprisingly modern view of the gender–sex distinction to suggest that while Shadd may be biologically female ("her own sex"), her masculine comportment in the public sphere disqualifies her from womanhood. On the other hand, however, the article troubles the question of biology, framing its critique of her conduct in both an anatomical idiom and a counterfactual one ("had [she] *not* had in her bosom more of the male than of the female heart" [my emphasis]).The attention to her "bosom" here is hardly accidental, anticipating a famous 1858 episode wherein a white man calling himself "Dr. Strain" interrupted one of Sojourner Truth's lectures in Indiana, claiming that "many persons present" (a "majority of them," in fact) believed that Truth was "a man disguised in women's clothing" and demanding that she "submit her breast to the inspection of some of the ladies present" to dispel their concerns. Truth, according to reporting, complied with the "boisterous 'Aye'" votes and "exposed her naked breast to the audience," who were apparently satisfied with her womanhood, but nevertheless took the opportunity to

hurl racist, sexist comments about her exposed body.[101] Though thankfully Shadd was not subjected to this degree of scrutiny and indignity, the remark that "her bosom" contains "more of the male than the female heart" insinuates similarly misogynist and transphobic speculations. Shadd's embodiment, then, becomes a site of projection for patriarchal anxieties about the erosion of traditionalist gender roles, the dissolution of separate spheres, and the imagined moral disintegration that would accompany gender/sexual nonconformity.

While I am not suggesting that Shadd *should* be read as trans, intersex, or nonbinary, I want to highlight that beyond simply asserting a feminine presence in the masculinist public sphere, her public performances also trouble cisgender, heteronormative patriarchy in ways that shaped her vision of the Black borderlands. C. Riley Snorton's racial history of transness proves instructive here. Resisting a narrow understanding of trans as a nominalized gender/sexual identity, he builds on Hortense Spillers's argument that the fungibility of Black bodies entails their ungendering to contend that "blackness functioned as a site for an elaboration of gender in which the fungible interchangeability of sex for chattel persons revealed gender within blackness to be a polymorphous proposition."[102] Much like Christina Sharpe's formulation of the "Trans*Atlantic," in which the asterisk "holds the place open for thinking" and "speaks to a range of configurations of Black being," Snorton argues that giving attention to how "captive flesh figures a critical genealogy for modern transness, as chattel persons gave rise to an understanding of gender as mutable and as an amendable form of being," ultimately "opens onto a new way of thinking about black gender as an infinite set of proliferative, constantly revisable reiterations figured 'outside' of gender's established and establishing symbolic order."[103] In Snorton's example of William and Ellen Craft's "cross-gendered fugitivity," for instance, cross-dressing enables their relocation from the United States to British soil, which, in turn, "engender[s] a kind of transubstantiation . . . from fugitive slaves to diasporic actors" who could "articulate themselves in relation to fluctuating modes of sovereignty by taking up the British colonial-imperialist project."[104] Though they must be meaningfully differentiated from episodes of refugees from slavery cross-dressing to avoid detection and detention, Shadd's speeches as a free Black woman nevertheless constitute a similar performance, in which her defiance of gender norms facilitates audiences questioning her gender/sex in ways that can only emerge from the racialized context of her ungendering as a by-product of slavery (though she herself was never enslaved). As a result, her experiences as a border-crossing public

speaker necessarily inform her conceptualization of Black internationalism in Canada.[105] Because her embodied speeches were appraised by audiences of men in the idioms of gendered transgressions, Shadd embraced a performance of transness as Snorton defines it: "a kind of being in the world where gender—though biologized—was not fixed but fungible, which is to say, revisable within blackness, as a condition of possibility."[106] Instead of transposing the white heteropatriarchal order of the United States onto Canada, her transgressive navigation of the masculinist public sphere situates redefinitions of gender as a guiding ethic for millennial forms of Blackness that could be imagined and practiced in the transnational arena of the US–Canada borderlands.[107]

Consequently, Shadd's understanding that Black women's differential gendering and racialization were mutually constitutive drives her arguments that Canada presented opportunities for Black settlers to reconceptualize the relationship between them. In a debate on emigration with J. C. Wears just a month after the Philadelphia convention, for example, her opponent patronizingly advised her that "though a lady, [she] was too high spirited to crave any *special favor* or *courtesy*, as in fact she was not entitled to any." Like the *British Banner*'s coverage, Wears's threat simultaneously recognizes Shadd as "a lady" and not. He argues that her "high spirited[ness]" exceeds the container of "lady" and therefore authorizes him to "treat her in the discussion precisely as he would a gentleman, occupying her position," all while performing his own "gentlemanliness" by honoring the sacred unassailability of "lady." In doing so, however, his conditional inadvertently recognizes that Shadd currently and rightfully belongs in this public space—his hypothetical is predicated on a gentleman occupying *her position*, implying her rightful possession of the space she claimed in the forum. Perhaps predictably, the debate concludes with "all agreeing that Miss Shadd had fully sustained her positions" and won the debate handily, leaving Wears and his supporters to "bear their defeat as well as they could under the circumstances." While entertaining to read, the article emphasizes Wears's failures at the expense of downplaying Shadd's triumphs, centering his lack of preparation, his clumsy evasion of her points, and his sore losing instead of her deft debate skills and rhetorical outmaneuvering of him. Because she was painfully attuned to such dynamics, one of Shadd's arguments in that arena bespeaks a fitting referendum on this patriarchal perspective. If Black public forums in the United States could only recognize Black women's successes as Black men's failures, then perhaps Canada, a place "where [the colored man's] manhood would be recognized," would assuage the masculine insecurities that

manifested as misogyny in Philadelphia. Moreover, in Canada, the same "increase of character, wealth, influence, education, &c." that would buttress Black masculinity would also largely be extended to women. Just as she claimed that anti-Black prejudice among white communities in Canada was "easily dispelled" by "colored people settling in the neighborhood, and making improvements," women's access to previously restricted roles and opportunities in the borderlands would similarly dismantle the patriarchy.[108]

Though she blurs gendered spheres in both her public performances and her internationalist thinking, Shadd nevertheless recognized the often-practical necessity (and for some, even desirability) of operating within the confines of socially policed gender roles. To that end, she also elevates "women's work" in the domestic realm, narrating women's contributions to families, homes, and schools as inextricable from Black community-building in Canada. According to Emilie-Andrée Jabouin, because Canada still legally proscribed Black women from citizenship (including voting rights), Shadd's writing "profoundly reopen[ed] the discussion of citizenship for black women through alternative tactics of reclamation."[109] Not only did her *Provincial Freeman* occupy space in the masculine-coded public arena of newspaper publishing and political discourse, where it exercised "a form of citizenship and political engagement," but it also identified similar segments of society where Black women could exert political influence and practice what Koritha Mitchell calls "homemade citizenship" outside the traditional avenues of civic engagement, as defined by (white) men.[110]

One such area was education. Here, the pipeline between Black women's access to education and their overwhelming representation in teaching prompts a reconceptualization of the gendered dimensions of the public–private distinction.[111] As Shirley Yee observes, Black women's education was still primarily aimed at "preparing them . . . for lives as knowledgeable and efficient wives and mothers" and as schoolteachers; in turn, Black women "were expected to support the ideals of black education and contemporary society by behaving like 'ladies.'"[112] Thus, despite education's primacy to uplift discourse, it ultimately reinforced the cult of domesticity. Shadd, however, hoped it might also be used to dismantle separate spheres ideology within the borderlands of Canada West. As her coeditor Ward reported after his 1854 tour of Black Canadian settlements, "The liberty enjoyed here makes different men of those once crushed and dispirited in the land of chains."[113] Situated in the liminal place between the slavocratic United States and the nominally free British empire, Canada was uniquely positioned to *make different men* than those socialized in patriarchal states through a multi-

generational cycle of uplift. And because education (with Black women as educators) would be central to this cultural transformation, Shadd implicitly calls for a matriarchal reconfiguration of power. She contends that women's education was not simply about refining unruly girls into proper ladies, wives, and mothers but also about producing future generations of teachers responsible for educating posterity. Thus, even as teaching became professionally and economically diminished as "women's work," the fact that teaching Black children in Canada was almost exclusively the purview of Black women positioned them to (re)shape the citizenry—a job of primary importance in the future-oriented ethos of racial uplift.[114] As a counterweight to this misogynist devaluation, Shadd reframes that labor as part of a broader women-led project of shaping citizens and the nation. Indeed, by reproducing an excerpt from Rev. G. S. Weaver's *Aims and Aids for Girls and Young Women* (1856) in the *Provincial Freeman*, Shadd argues that the "eminently practical" characteristics that make women effective teachers are said to include "strong judgment, a rich store of practical good sense, an ample fund of tact, skill shrewdness, inventiveness, and management."[115] Significantly, these attributes are coextensive with those of an ideal citizen. This catalog of traits certainly makes a case for women's broader participation in civic life, but it additionally emphasizes that the labor of civic education and community-building does not take place solely in the masculine-coded political sphere ("legislations"); it also occurs in the feminine-coded domestic sphere ("mother, wife, and friend"). Thus, because the classroom mediates the putatively separate public and private spheres, the domestic/private labors of women "as mother, wife, and friend" extend into the political/public work of subject formation that women undertake in the classroom ("she makes men and trains them").[116]

Because women would steer the multigenerational project of founding and forming a Black community through education, this labor also occasioned an opportunity to rethink gender roles and gender's role in that community. In fact, the success of the former, Shadd argued in her paper, depended on the latter. "How can the woman-mind, undeveloped, untrained, uninspired with guest aims, grand and brave resolutions and actions, impress the minds of the generation to come with strength, power, activity intellectual and moral vigor?" the *Provincial Freeman* asks, before outlining the alternative:

> If the world were mine, and I could educate but one sex, it should be the girls. I could make a greater and better world of the next generation by educating the girls of this. It is not half so important that our

> legislations be wise as that our mothers be so. It is not half so important that our men be brave, as that our women be so. Strengthen the woman-heart, and you strengthen the world. Give me a nation of noble women, and I will give you a noble nation. Cultivate the woman-mind if you would cultivate the race.[117]

More than simply making a feminist case for the elevation of "women's work," Shadd marshals these passages from Weaver to identify gynocentric education as paramount to Black internationalism and community-building in the Black borderlands. It emerges as *the* central labor of subject formation—the more effectively women are educated in "eminently practical" fields, the more effectively they can educate the Black population in Canada. Even as the concentric circles of impact articulated in the final imperative parallelisms (the world, the nation, the race) taper in scope, this rhetorical structure correspondingly implies that ripples of change would expand outward: educating Black citizens would form the foundation of a noble community in Canada, whose transnational positionality in the borderlands and internationalist sensibilities would then strengthen the world. Though *legally* disenfranchised, in other words "a woman wields a pious sceptre of vast power."[118] Shadd's attention to this "sceptre" speaks to an understated condition of possibility in the US–Canada borderlands: a feminist identification with Great Britain's figurehead, Queen Victoria. According to Arianne Chernock, the mid-nineteenth century was marked by "an increasing association of the female sovereign with an idealized version of constitutional monarchy," wherein Queen Victoria symbolized the promise that queens regnant would not only "perform their constitutional roles differently" but perform them "*better*, in ways that enabled the government to function most effectively, precisely because of women's presumed 'ductility' in political affairs and innate moral sense."[119] Such optimism is obviously hampered by historical hindsight and the century of British imperialism that followed, but amid the millennial energy of emigrationism in the 1850s, the potential for reimagining Black liberation in Canada under the matriarchal guidance of a benevolent queen regnant was likely alluring for Shadd, who was understandably skeptical that most Black settler-colonies in Canada merely intended to transplant "the philosophy of the American Middle Class" onto Canadian soil, including the deeply patriarchal "virtues of self-reliance, individualism, and independence," and "profit-making capitalism."[120]

By contrast, the loose affiliations of empire, including the protections of British law and the Queen's political pliability, emboldened Black women in

Canada to imagine something new. For example, as the aforementioned migrant Mary Jane Robinson wrote to her friend in New York, "I heard that OLD FILMORE [*sic*] *is screwing you all up tighter still,* but don't stay there, come to *Queen Victoria's land, where they are not making laws to oppress and to starve you,*" adding for emphasis, "*Away with your King Fillmore, I am for* QUEEN VICTORIA. GOD SAVE THE QUEEN."[121] Ironically inverting hemispheric discourses that framed New World republicanism in contradistinction to Old World monarchism, Robinson's identification of Millard Fillmore as "old" and a "king" names the failures of the United States to distinguish itself sufficiently from the tyrannical monarchy from which they declared their independence in 1776. In the guiding hands of enslavers and their enablers, the US-American experiment was corrupting the millennial possibilities of republicanism, a failure further dramatized by European nations like France adopting explicitly antislavery modes of republicanism after 1848.[122] Queen Victoria, conversely, emerges as a progressive matriarchal alternative in the *Provincial Freeman*. Not only did her distance provide protections without impositions, but her constancy afforded stable conditions for the subjectivation and self-definition of free Black citizens, a sharp contrast to the frenetic regime changes of party politics and presidential elections in the antebellum United States. The hope for Shadd was that Queen Victoria's "feminine" governance would trickle down into the soil of Black Canadian settlements, sprouting communities rooted in feminist principles rather than the United States' intransigently heteropatriarchal republicanism.

Conclusion

While most accounts of the Bibbs-Shadd feud focus on their disagreements, I want to avoid adding to these contrasts a reductive binary in which the parties respectively represent conservativism and progressivism regarding gender politics. For formerly enslaved people, Yee reminds us, even though embracing white bourgeois gender ideals effectively entailed "trading one set of stereotypes for another," this compromise also "reflected an understandable desire to erase the stereotypes that had been developed to justify their subjugation and to attain a sense of independence."[123] Their differences notwithstanding, both Shadd and the Bibbs viewed the Black borderlands as a terrain where a repertoire of gendered performances unavailable to Black people in the United States became imaginable, accessible, and even practical. The Bibbs sought access to the gender roles they saw as essential to uplifting formerly enslaved refugees into Canadian citizens, while Shadd sought

feminist alternatives to gender roles forged within the same heteropatriarchal order that allowed slavery to thrive. For all their differences, then, each understood gender as primary to the Black borderland communities they envisioned, laying bare an often unexplored but key dimension of Black internationalism and emigrationism: how lived experiences in the Black borderlands created space to reimagine gender as a constitutive element of race and nation.

Despite concerted efforts from their newspapers, though, the Bibbs and Shadd often proffered disingenuously rosy portraits of Canadian life that belied the harsh realities impoverished refugees and even financially stable Black migrants encountered. The emigrationist energy generated after 1850 could not sustain itself, and by the end of the Civil War, many (if not most) emigrants returned to the United States disillusioned and exhausted. And yet even as organized emigrationism turned away from Canada, the political formations that evolved in the Black borderlands continued to influence Black internationalism. As we will see in chapter 4, the ability to organize across political borders, including the capacity to understand local freedom struggles while connecting them to a broader movement, would be essential as Manifest Destiny's attention turned southward.

CHAPTER FOUR

Diaspora Literacy and the "Africanization" of Cuba

> Until the Americans intruded themselves into Cuba, contaminating society wherever they located, black and colored gentlemen and ladies of rank mingled indiscriminately in society. But since the advent of these negro-haters, the colored people of Cuba have been reduced nearly, if not quite, to the level of the miserable degraded position of the colored people of the United States.
>
> —MARTIN DELANY, "Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent" (1854)

> Pan-Africa means intellectual understanding and cooperation among all groups of Negro descent in order to bring about at the earliest possible time the industrial and spiritual emancipation of the Negro peoples. Such a movement must begin with a certain spiritual housecleaning. American Negroes, West Indians, West Africans and South Africans must proceed immediately to wipe from their minds the preconcepts of each other which they have gained through white newspapers.
>
> —W. E. B. DUBOIS, "Pan-Africa and New Racial Philosophy" (1933)

In fall 1853, the *Daily National Intelligencer* commented on a report that was "calculated to startle": Great Britain was intervening into foreign affairs to accelerate the abolition of slavery in Cuba, not only sounding "the knell of slavery in the Antilles" but also signaling their intentions "for wresting the island from the dominion of Spain." The article details a concerted British effort to facilitate gradual emancipation in Cuba by "introducing apprentices from Africa into Cuba, with the consent of Spain and under the protection of British ships-of-war, to be worked for ten years as slaves; with the further agreement that slavery shall cease to exist in the island at the end of fifty years." Deliberately undermining its stated purpose of quelling national anxieties over Great Britain doubly violating the Monroe Doctrine (intruding into both US-American foreign policy with Spain and domestic debates over slavery in the United States), the article fanned the most unspeakable fears of Southern enslavers by contextualizing the potential emancipation of 800,000 enslaved people in Cuba with a reminder that "slavery has long since

been extinguished in the large French Island of Hayti."[1] Not only would the abolition of slavery in Cuba sever the illegal routes for human trafficking that continued to feed Southern demands for kidnapped Africans, but the immediate proximity of enormous populations of free Black people in Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba would exacerbate their worries about a domino effect. The British, the report insinuates, were acutely aware of this uneasiness because of uprisings throughout their own colonies after failed attempts at gradual emancipation in the 1830s. Furthermore, the article suggests the British would leverage these fears to pressure the United States into abolishing slavery, thereby leveling the economic playing field among imperial powers competing for global markets. However accurate or exaggerated these reports were (most coverage dismissed the scandal as blustery posturing among Atlantic nations or annexationist propaganda), their impact on US-American thinking about Cuba was demonstrable. Racist fearmongering and the centrality of Cuba in (inter)national news transformed their catchy characterization of this scheme as the "Africanization of Cuba" into a commonplace expression in the mid-1850s.[2]

So, what exactly did concerns about the "Africanization of Cuba" mean, and what connotations would this phrase accumulate circulating in transnational political discourses? Most concisely, I contend that it names a process of demographic and cultural changes that would result in Cuban institutions assuming the character of African "barbarity" in contradistinction to Euro-American "civilization." The nominalization was relatively new, however, and therefore pliable, entering English usage just a decade earlier. Furthermore, the fact that it emerges more or less contemporaneously with the linguistic advent of "Americanization" proves instructive.[3] For example, the abolitionist *National Era* accused slavery's advocates and expansionists of fabricating fears that the British were "plotting to arrest our territorial expansion" by supporting the Cuban apprenticeship program "so as to prevent, by its Africanization, its Americanization."[4] Here, "Americanization" signifies both a transformation of political status (annexing the Spanish colony to the United States as a state) and culture (assimilating Cubans into the United States as citizens). Efforts to colonize Cuba through subjugation and assimilation (including the models of racial "absorption" seen in chapter 2) not only expressed the white nationalist ethos of Manifest Destiny but also established "Africanization" as a similarly self-conscious and violent scheme that competing imperial powers advanced to obviate the culmination of Manifest Destiny. By framing "Americanization" as a preventive measure against "Africanization," the latter term ultimately

serves to conjure the white nightmare of another Haiti—a self-emancipated Black state with a self-governing Black population fostering Africana culture(s)—while also justifying preemptive colonization as upholding the Monroe Doctrine and protecting the "righteous" US-American hegemony in the Americas.[5] Through this juxtaposition, the white gaze reveals the anxieties of whiteness embedded in the ambitions of imperial expansion. "More than any other area," Reginald Horsman writes, "Cuba attracted southern interest in the 1850s," exacerbating sectionalist rifts between North and South but "also revealing . . . the constraints placed on American expansion by new racial ideas." Proponents of annexing Cuba, for example, nevertheless expressed concerns that the island was "too densely populated to be 'Americanized,'" lamenting that the promise of annexation was tempered by the impracticality of "changing the racial characteristics of the [majority Black and biracial] population" in Cuba.[6]

While the racist roots of "Africanization" are perhaps unsurprising, this chapter asks what the term communicated to Black organizers in the United States, and how its license to define what Africanized cultural institutions were (and could be) informed Black internationalist writing about a majority Afro-descended colony like Cuba. As Stuart Hall argues, "Africa" is, in the Derridean sense, "necessarily 'deferred'—as a spiritual, cultural, and political metaphor" that Euro-Americans have normalized and fixed "by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitive, unchanging past."[7] It serves as a homogenizing container that reduces an eclectic continent of cultures and histories into a pretended common denominator (Blackness), thereby subserving white supremacist fantasies and authorizing racial capitalism. For Black internationalists, though, a monolithic Africa was a useful fiction that animated possibilities for diasporic solidarity. As a principle and practice of stabilizing these bonds, then, the political potency of "Africa" requires deft navigation of the diverse genealogical and geographical trajectories that originate there and thereby theoretically unite the diaspora; at the same time, it also requires a recognition that the continental coherence of "Africa" only obtains in transatlantic slavery's wake. Hall employs diaspora "metaphorically, not literally," dismissing a formulation of "scattered tribes whose identities can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return." Instead, "the diaspora experience" is characterized not by appeals to origin or essence but rather through identities that are "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference," yielding manifold relations in which cultural differences "are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference."[8] Because "Africa"

becomes an imagined community through transatlantic slavery, it is in this sense always a diasporic construct. But rather than reconstructing a fictitious past or envisioning an impossible return, diaspora leverages the utility of a metaphorical "Africa"—rooted in shared histories emanating from the "traumatic ruptures" that "enforced separations from Africa"—to consolidate and preserve those differences into a political community.[9]

Building on Hall's formulation, this chapter tracks how Black internationalists implicitly adopted Africanization amid debates over Cuba's annexation to the United States. The Black appropriations and recircuiting of this concept speak back against both its weaponization by annexationists and its discursive homogenization of the continent in service of transnational white supremacy. Whereas Euro-Americans viewed the Africanization of Cuba as a devolution into "barbarity" that threatened to resonate throughout the Americas, the texts I consider here conceptualize it as a reorganization of American societies to more closely resemble what "Africa" signifies to its diaspora: a metaphor for the liberationist organization of a diverse coalition of African Americans (in its broadest sense) that are "*both* the same *and* different," and in which "the difference *matters*."[10]

I begin with Martin Delany's serial novel, *Blake, or the Huts of America* (1859; 1861–62), expanding on Eric Sundquist's pioneering reading of how the Cuban El Día de los Reyes celebration in its final chapters "demonstrated the necessary syncretism that infused any Afro-New World society" and "provided, in its ritual breaking down of the regulating power of the slave regime, a model for the eruption of revolution."[11] While Sundquist provocatively claims that these African cultural retentions constitute "an indigenous account of 'Africanization' that powerfully reorients the role of Afro-Cubans among the various factions pitted against the Spanish slaveholding regime," I argue that these events culminate an evolving strategy throughout *Blake* that expands far beyond Cuba. This chapter traces a network of religious, cultural, and political assemblages in the US-American South, Cuba, and West Africa to unveil the novel's theory of diaspora, wherein Africanization represents both the means and the ends of the hemispheric Black confederation that Delany envisions in the novel. By elaborating a reading strategy championed by the novel itself, I divulge how Black organizers in *Blake* accumulate local knowledge from their distinctive constituencies to facilitate recruitment and augment their revolution's impact—they must learn what makes their African (American) allies *different* and then communicate across those differences to elucidate what makes them the *same*.

In the second half of this chapter, I examine the real-life praxis of Delany's theorizing: postbellum Black US-American support for the Cuban revolutionaries in the Ten Years' War. Because slavery persisted in Cuba and because the anticolonial rebellion took concrete steps toward emancipation, Black activists in the United States formed the Cuban Anti-Slavery Society (CASS) to pressure the federal government into formally recognizing Cuba's belligerency rights in their efforts to decolonize from Spain. Whereas *Blake* envisions Africanization as a means for organizing a transnational Army of Emancipation, the CASS envisions it as a politics of Black internationalist solidarity enacted through an "Africanized" form of democracy: the Black conventions movement. During the antebellum period, these local, state, regional, and national assemblies constituted what Derrick Spires calls "an alternative trajectory for how participatory politics could be enacted" in response to increasingly draconian efforts to codify the conflation of citizenship and whiteness, efforts that juridically reduced Black citizenship to "the burdens of legal culpability associated with personhood without the privileges and protections of full citizenship."[12] In the postbellum period, however, the continuation of these conventions as sites of Black access to and practices of citizenship bespeaks the uneasy optimism of Reconstruction. Formed after the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments' ratifications, the CASS bridges antebellum strategies for negotiating political power outside the formal racist constraints imposed on Black US-Americans and the radical expansion of legal citizenship that W. E. B. DuBois famously documents in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935): its December 1872 convention, the publication of its proceedings as *Slavery in Cuba* (1873), and subsequent gatherings in several other major cities eventually culminated in a petition and a meeting with President Ulysses S. Grant, marking an evolution of antebellum practices into new possibilities for democratic representation and accountability.

Together, the fictional Black Atlantic revolution of *Blake* and the CASS's civic engagement demonstrate the intimacy between local contexts and international politics, revealing their mutual capacities to exert influence on each other. That is, such a model of diaspora mandates understanding local actions as shaped by global forces, and vice versa, while also emphasizing the interconnectedness of Black localities to one another through international politics. What results, I argue, is a distinctly "Africanized" vision of international relations in which diaspora ultimately offers an alternative mode of foreign policy that contests not only US-American imperialism but

also the ideologies that animate the idea of the "Western Hemisphere" that I have documented throughout *The Race for America*: that Manifest Destiny's millennialist framing of the hemisphere hinges on a mytho-history of "Anglo-Saxons" perfecting the democratic ideals of their Germanic ancestors by developing republican governments that rejected the tyrannical monarchies of Europe, a distinction that paved the way for the Monroe Doctrine evolving over the nineteenth century from a defensive foreign policy into an actively imperialist one underwritten by the permission structures of Manifest Destiny.[13] By reflecting on how the Africanization of the hemisphere through the transatlantic slave trade and the Africanization of republicanism through alternative practices of citizenship and critiques from below, Black internationalists used diaspora to begin imagining explicitly anticolonial and "Africanized" modes of international relations—approaches that, while commonplace in the twentieth century, signify a marked departure from the more fraught articulations of Black internationalism discussed in other chapters.

Learning Diaspora Literacy in *Blake*

The peregrinating plot of *Blake, or The Huts of America: A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States, and Cuba* actually exceeds the massive geographic scope of its lengthy title, so a brief summary of this unusual novel is merited. Henry Blake (born Henrico Blacus in Cuba) was sold into slavery as a young man and trafficked to Mississippi, where the novel opens years later. After learning his enslavers intend to sell him, Henry absconds from the Natchez plantation, vowing revenge against not only his enslavers but the entire institution. He travels throughout the South, disseminating a clandestine scheme for a nationwide slave rebellion and forging the communication networks necessary to sustain it. Upon returning to Mississippi, he learns that his wife, Maggie, was sent to Cuba for resisting the sexual advances of her enslaver. After delivering the rest of his family to Canada, Henry makes for Cuba, where he quickly reunites with Maggie and facilitates her emancipation. This journey also reveals Henry's personal history through an encounter with his estranged cousin, Placido. A fictionalized character based on the Afro-descended Cuban poet Plácido (the pseudonym of Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés), Henry's relation connects him to the island's incipient resistance movement. To aid the cause, Henry sails for Africa aboard a slave ship disguised as a commercial vessel, where, upon returning, he arranges for the sale of the kidnapped Africans to his allies, thereby recruiting

them into a growing conspiracy to destroy slavery throughout the Americas. *Blake* was serialized in two Black periodicals (first the *Anglo-African Magazine* and then the *Weekly Anglo-African*), but because the issues containing the novel's final chapters are seemingly nonextant, its ending remains uncertain—the text abruptly concludes on the precipice of a revolution that lies beyond the novel's horizon.

In divulging its expansive political imagination, *Blake* relies on heavy-handed didacticism. Not only does it stage Socratic dialogues designed to wither proslavery arguments and internecine arguments for more conservative approaches to Black liberation (e.g., waiting for legislative action), but it meticulously instructs readers in concrete actions for organizing Black communities. Foremost among *Blake*'s lessons is a masterclass in what Vèvè Clark terms *diaspora literacy*. Responding to (white) US-American readers' frustrations with difficult Afro-Caribbean writings, Clark contends that these texts are only inscrutable insofar as they issue "a command from indigenous, cultural perspectives beyond the field of Western or westernized signification." In other words, if white readers struggle with Afro-Caribbean texts, it is because they were not written for them; and if they wish to understand them, they must learn to read on the texts' own terms: "It is a skill for both narrator and reader, which demands a knowledge of historical, social, cultural, and political development generated by lived and textual experience."[14] Despite journeying across the South in 1839, traveling as a journalist for the *North Star*, living in Canada from 1856 to 1859, and leading the Niger Valley Exploring Party in 1859–60, Delany could hardly be said to possess exhaustive familiarity with his novel's many locales. Still, *Blake* inculcates its readers into intensely local intelligence (curfew laws, restrictions on mobility, cruel/permissive enslavers, and so on), often in crucial moments of crisis where that expertise represents the difference between capture and escape, between life and death. Thus, although *Blake* occasionally adopts supercilious tones toward African cultures and their adaptations in the South, developing diaspora literacy becomes paramount to its project. For diasporic subjects, understanding "indigenous cultural perspectives" of *other* diasporic subjects is table stakes for diaspora's political potency. Accumulating knowledge and facilitating communication through diaspora literacy not only enable the navigation of the circum-Atlantic routes necessary for amassing a revolutionary army but also unravel the manifold false consciousnesses (class, nation, color, caste) that might otherwise inhibit the development of a more expansive diaspora consciousness.

We see *Blake*'s investments in diaspora literacy most immediately in religion. Henry's project depends on an extended process of making religion that rejects the racist structures of existing worship "to create a new religious establishment that protects black people."[15] At the novel's outset, Henry repudiates Christianity as an instrument through which white institutions reinforce servility, passivity, and complacency: "Don't tell me about religion! What's religion to me? . . . Put my trust in the Lord! I have done so all my life nearly, and of what use is it to me?"[16] These rhetorical questions illustrate that religion's utility to Henry is as a means of liberation and enlightenment: "You must make your religion serve your interests, as your oppressors do theirs."[17] Henry employs this strategy throughout his travels, and we see its culmination once he gathers the Grand Council of the Army of Emancipation in Cuba. His call for an inaugural prayer at the meeting briefly derails its business as dissent emerges from the Catholic Afro-Cubans. Henry responds by enumerating the myriad sects their shared cause has convened, only to assure them that none of these faiths are alone sufficient: "No religion but that which brings us liberty will we know; no God but he who owns us as his children will we serve. . . . [Our ceremonies] are borrowed from no denomination, creed, nor church: no existing organization, secret, secular, nor religious; but originated by ourselves, adopted to our own condition, circumstances, and wants, founded upon the eternal word of God our Creator, as impressed upon the tablet of our hearts."[18] What Grant Shreve calls Henry's investment in "religious novelty"—repudiating existing religions and instead drawing on useful aspects of multiple belief systems to forge a heterogeneous assemblage—describes practices ubiquitous throughout the diaspora.[19] Enslaved Africans and their descendants retained their religious-cultural beliefs, but they also eventually adopted and integrated Christian doctrines into these beliefs, either by evacuating the religious aspects of African cultural practices to square them with Christianity or by borrowing distinct elements from each culture to develop new expressions. Religious novelty, then, refers not only to blending elements of Euro-American and African religions, but also blending the secular and the sacred, the political and the providential, the cosmopolitan and the provincial. In this way, these beliefs and practices function "not only as an implement humans use to make transnational connections, but also as a thickly lived set of connections to the material that allows the subject to access something outside of the nation-state—that orients the individual otherwise."[20]

It is fitting, then, that Henry eventually articulates the political expediency of developing a shared novel religion to unify the African diaspora

around a common goal. Recruiting a revolutionary army depends on his accumulation of knowledge about the myriad Black cultures that have developed in highly localized and disparate contexts. In doing so, Henry imagines diasporic intimacies that develop in the lived experiences of Blackness and then exceed local and national affiliations; or, as John Ernest frames Henry's project, "What is required is the development of a mode of religious interpretation that extends beyond the purely spiritual realm, one capable of reading the world."[21] Ernest's phrase "reading the world" proves doubly insightful. When directed at the white world, *Blake*'s endorsement of religious novelty is a *reading* of white Christianity in the Black vernacular sense, where "to 'get read' or 'be read' is to be dressed down, or told about yourself"; but when directed at the Black world Henry consolidates through his revolutionary enterprise, *reading* the Black Atlantic requires a polyglot versed in the diverse dispersed communities that would comprise its constituents.[22] This is diaspora literacy.

In what follows, I highlight African religious-cultural practices that pervade the novel and invigorate the diasporic praxis that *Blake* champions. Before proceeding, however, I want to clarify that I am not claiming that Delany deliberately wrote these references into *Blake*. Instead, though largely unfamiliar with and uninterested in African religions, Delany was nevertheless invested in what DuBois calls "a certain spiritual housecleaning" in the epigraph to this chapter.[23] My contention, then, is not that Delany sounded a deep reservoir of knowledge regarding African cultures to sprinkle references throughout his work. Instead, I argue that diasporic readers *could* recognize these allusions in the text regardless of intentionality and that such interpretations would be meaningful and useful for developing real-world corollaries to the novel's transnational revolution. Whether Delany understood himself to be authoring allusions is irrelevant because he nevertheless intuitively recognized that symbolism depends on interpretation. *Blake* could therefore signify "simultextually" by "allow[ing] readers who do not always enjoy shared fields of cultural and social knowledge to take multiple interpretive paths through narratives."[24] More interpretive paths, Delany realized, meant more opportunities for the novel to activate diverse Black audiences and could therefore help organize that diaspora of readers into a politically efficacious body.

These tensions between Delany's internalized US-American exceptionalism and his recognition of diaspora literacy's utility materialize throughout *Blake*. Its polyglot protagonist routinely communicates across languages and cultures. Introduced to readers as "a man of good literary attainments . . .

having been educated in the West Indies," this edification shapes his scheme.[25] Not only does he learn to read, write, and speak several languages in Cuba, but his vocational education at sea also teaches him about navigational routes, naval operations, international commerce, and what Julius Scott calls the *common wind* of Black maritime communication networks.[26] As Henry moves throughout the South, for example, he gathers knowledge from local informants (names of enslavers, recent gossip, individual plantations' cultures, and so on). In "Come What Will," for instance, Henry secures passage on a steamer as "Gilbert," an identity he assumes based on his knowledge of trade and horse racing along the Mississippi River, while in "What Not," he learns of extensive gossip networks that have already disseminated his plot for him, allowing locals to anticipate his arrival and facilitate his movements. Similarly, in "A Flying Cloud," he mistakenly attempts to present as free, only to learn of a statewide restriction on free Black people's movements in South Carolina, prompting his premature retreat from the state and his more surreptitious movements through Charleston in the subsequent chapter.

In sum, these lessons instruct Henry that mobility and accruing regional knowledge are mutually constitutive and mutually enriching. This simple fact animates his plan to foment rebellion. As he alights from the Franks' plantation to begin that labor, his instructions to Charles and Andy demonstrate that education's revolutionary function:

> I now go as a runaway, and will be suspected of lurking about in the thickets, swamps and caves; then to make the ruse complete, just as often as you think it necessary, to make a good impression, you must kill a shoat, take a lamb, pig, turkey, goose, chickens, ham of bacon from the smoke house, a loaf of bread or crock of butter from the spring house, and throw them down into the old waste well at the back of the old quarters, always leaving the heads of the fowls lying about and the blood of the larger animals.[27]

While Henry's travels will take him far from Natchez, "the ruse" he creates is his absent presence, which haunts the Franks, simulating his proximity and imminent return. Moreover, the periodic theft and slaughter of livestock fabricate evidence of *grand marronage,* or the presence of a maroon community within striking distance of the plantation. By redirecting the fearful white gaze to spectral sites, Henry enables his actual movements.[28] Significantly, this pretended *marronage* relies on simulated signs of Conjure—"an extensive area of magic, practices, and lore that includes healing, spells, and supernatural

objects," which, while rooted in African religions, were gradually secularized in the United States and largely divorced from their sacred contexts.[29] When Charles and Andy stage chicken heads and animal blood, these remains not only signify Henry's theft of food from the Franks; they also code as traces of Conjure rituals, exacerbating white fears of maroon communities, who could strike the plantation directly or use folk knowledge to poison them.[30]

Henry's most direct encounter with Conjure occurs when his hurried escape from South Carolina leads him to the Dismal Swamp, where he meets the high conjurors, Gamby Gholar and Maudy Ghamus. Located in the terraqueous North Carolina–Virginia borderlands, the Dismal Swamp is strongly associated with the storied rebellions of Nat Turner and Gabriel, as well as *marronage* and Conjure.[31] Despite recognizing Conjure's capacity to disconcert enslavers, Henry seems at best ambivalent about its authenticity or utility. Tellingly, he reprises *Blake*'s ubiquitous metaphor for revolution ("sowing the seeds from which in due season, he anticipated an abundant harvest") but quickly laments that any of his efforts at "sowing the seeds of a future crop" in the Dismal Swamp would fail, since they would "only take root in the thick black waters which cover it, to be grown in devastation and reaped in a whirlwind of ruin."[32] While Henry later discovers the power contained in the waters of the Black Atlantic, here he dismisses the Dismal Swamp's "thick black waters," which he believes have yielded only thick (dull) Black disciples of Conjure. The episode is rife with parodic condescension. As Gamby Gholar repeatedly presents mundane detritus as arcane artifacts, the narration consistently exposes these as deceptions and misrepresentations: "scales which he declared to be from very dangerous serpents, but which closely resembled, and were believed to be, those of innocent and harmless fish"; "a fragment of green bottle glass, which he claimed to be a mysterious and precious 'blue stone' got at a peculiar and unknown spot in the Swamp"; and "a forked breastbone of a small bird, which, muttering to himself, he called the 'charm bone of a treefrog.'"[33] When Charles and Andy later solicit tales from the storied swamp, Henry replies contemptuously, "Now you see, boys . . . how much conjuration and such foolishness and stupidity is worth to the slaves in the South. All that it does, is to put money into the pockets of the pretended conjurer, give him power over others by making them afraid of him."[34] Read together, Henry's remarks characterize Conjure as a hustle that, while useful for stoking white anxieties, offers only false hope for the enslaved, who would be better served using their money to fund their escapes than contributing to

heretics and con artists like the high conjurors. By contrast, Henry instructs Charles and Andy in astronomy and economy, establishing himself as a rational man of science capable of exposing Conjure as a scam designed to dupe the credulous (whether white or Black).[35]

Henry, however, initially misunderstands or at least downplays two significant aspects of Conjure. First, his skepticism notwithstanding, he personally depends on Conjure throughout his travels, such as when two enslaved elders in Arkansas instruct him "how to chaum dogs." While Henry already "understand[s] the mixed bull, but not the full-bred Cuba dogs," they promise to "lahn [him] how to fix 'em all!"[36] This knowledge becomes essential for his survival. Later in this chapter and then again en route to Canada, Henry is pursued by hounds, and in both cases he skillfully charms and kills them. The disparity between Henry's professions and actions here also relieves the significance of the "large sluggish, lazy moving serpent" Henry describes during his meeting with the high conjurors. Commonly read as a parodic symbol for the atavism and impotence of Conjure, what Henry recognizes as an "entirely tame and petted snake" is regarded by Maudy Ghamus as "in terrible rage" and prone to "kill . . . like flash."[37] This scene actually documents yet another instance of using Conjure to charm nature's most dangerous elements in the South. Snakes, as so many slave narratives document, were a pervasive obstacle for self-emancipated people forced to seclude themselves in forests and swamps, as Henry himself learns when he awakes in a hollow log to find "a rattlesnake of the largest size" seeking to warming itself with his unconscious body. Shortly after learning that the conjurors' serpent "had been trained to approach when called as any other pet," they coronate Henry "conjuror of the highest degree known to their art."[38] Tellingly, after achieving this rank, he never encounters another snake—or, more likely, his newly gained capacity to charm them renders subsequent encounters unworthy of description because they are uneventfully resolved.

Henry's second misunderstanding of Conjure is more fundamental. *Blake* presents the high conjurors' claims about history as evidence of their unreliability: "With delight they recounted the many exploits of whom they conceived to be the greatest men who ever lived, the pretended deeds of whom were fabulous, some of the narrators claiming to have been patriots in the American Revolution." When Maudy Ghamus claims "I an' Gennel Gabel fit in de Malution wah," Henry is incredulous that the conjuror is a nonagenarian who fought in the Revolutionary War alongside the future leader of the 1800 slave rebellion.[39] If, as many have suggested, the moment is intended to unveil the conjurors as con men, then it also impugns the novel's idiosyn-

cratic temporal mechanics, which routinely disregard linearity, causality, and finality. Indeed, influential interpretations of the novel contend that Delany's historical revisionism and unsettled historical setting "escape the colonial order of chronology" and reject "U.S. historiography, which is the progressive unfolding of white liberalism"; so even if we view the conjurors' claims as apocryphal, they nevertheless form part of this same anticolonial project.[40] But what if Maudy Ghamus is earnest here? To read his claims as historical impossibilities is to misread the "American Revolution" as only referring to the United States' origins. Instead, we might more productively read "de Malution wah" in which Maudy Ghamus and General Gabriel fought as a hemispheric American revolution for Black liberation. This oral history, as Grégory Pierrot observes, "substitutes a line of black heroes for the fathers of American independence and emphasizes the fact that the former are still working at completing the quest for freedom the latter did not bother to finish"—an ongoing project that began with contemporaneous Black critiques of and participation in the Revolutionary War (1775–83) and extended through Gabriel's uprising in Virginia (1800) and the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804).[41] Rather than viewing his claims as adhering to an implausible timeline, we can read Maudy Ghamus as expanding the geographical scope of the "American" revolution into a hemispheric enterprise and foregrounding Black freedom fighters in that struggle.

Significantly, despite Henry's condescension toward Conjure and his initial misunderstandings of its utility, he nevertheless learns its lessons and employs its strategies for Black organizing. In fact, when he later professes to Andy and Charles that "even old Gamby Gholar and Maudy Ghamus and the rest of the 'Seven Heads,' with all of the high conjurors in the Dismal Swamp, are depending more upon me to deliver them from their confinement as prisoners in the Swamp and runaway slaves, than all their combined efforts together," these derisions mask Henry's use of Conjure.[42] If, as claimed, Henry has become a high conjuror, then what more efficacious means of practicing it than convincing his own acolytes that Conjure is a scam and only *he* can guide them to freedom? He positions himself as indispensable to the movement and a truth teller among con men—just like the Dismal Swamp's conjurors frame themselves to their followers. Though Henry rejects Conjure (beyond its capacity to charm dogs, snakes, and followers and terrorize white antagonists), many of the enslaved men and women he seeks to recruit embrace it, making his literacy in its epistemologies and his authority as a high conjuror essential for coalition-building. As a constellation of knowledge and rituals forged from disparate elements of the African

diaspora in the crucible of transatlantic slavery, Conjure represents both an ends and a means of Black organizing. As Kameelah Martin observes, although leaders like Delany "believed that disavowing folk beliefs about sympathetic magic and the supernatural was the first necessary step toward racial uplift," there was nevertheless "a large populace who believed in and practiced conjure with no regard for racial solidarity or changing the minds of white folks."[43] Independent of his own beliefs, then, Delany's fictional avatar (Henry) comes to appreciate Conjure's capacity for establishing credibility with those who believe its power and for recruiting revolutionaries through the utilitarian (re)combination of disparate elements of religions, philosophies, and epistemologies that comprise it.[44]

At the close of the same chapter, Henry offers his coconspirators a further lesson in Conjure's power: "I'll show you when we leave for the North, what money will do for you, right here in Mississippi. Bear in mind; it is your certain passport through the white gap, as I term it."[45] He fulfills this promise by repeatedly bribing white gatekeepers when brokering passage on ships and ferries. Coins, in these moments, operate as Conjure talismans. "Vessels of the supernatural" and "objects of spiritual efficacy," Yvonne Chireau writes, "charms were greatly valued by Africans for the health, protection, and prosperity of the individual and the community."[46] Like a charm, coins in *Blake* magically transmute foes into friends. Metonymy heightens the effect in later scenes in which coins are offered in exchange for safe passage: the sight of "a shining golden eagle," "five half-eagle pieces," and "the outstretched wings of the eagle" supernaturally "charm" white men who would otherwise obstruct their journey.[47] As a national symbol, the eagle exposes white allegiance to capital over law while also signifying the coin's power to aid the refugees' flight from slavery. Like the seemingly mundane objects Gamby Gholar presents as mystical artifacts, though, the coin's potency is "real" only to the extent that it achieves the desired effect; Conjure epistemology, wherein created/found objects accrue supernatural power, therefore strongly resembles the logic of a currency-based economy. Coins are stores of exchange-value and talismans of trade, worthless independent of their purchasing power. If Conjure is mere superstition, then, it is no more so than the ideology undergirding a currency-based economy.[48]

These lessons are among many that Henry imparts to his followers and *Blake*'s readers. In "Studying Head Work," he explains three different methods of charting a northward passage: reading the sky to find the North Star (including an accompanying illustration in the *Weekly Anglo-African*), reading trees for moss (which only grows on their northern side), and reading a

compass. This overt didacticism inculcates readers in the novel's praxis of diasporic literacy and brings the chapter's title into relief. In one uncomfortably minstrel-like scene, Andy remarks of Henry, "Wy, ole feller, you is way up in de hoobanah! Wy, you is conjure sho'nuff," to which Daddy Joe adds, "I 'fess dat's all head-wuck! Da beats Punton! dat boy's nigh up to Maudy Ghamus!"[49] On one level, "head work" signifies the "required information, knowledge, and clear, disciplined thinking" that Henry practices and instills in the party, but if we take seriously Andy's appraisal of Henry as "conjure sho'nuff," then "head work" becomes "Head work," or the work of "the supreme executive body [of high conjurors] called the 'Head,'" which consists of "seven aged men, noted for their superior experience and wisdom."[50] The head work he encourages among his party is coextensive with the Head's work, and because the Head "licensed [Henry] with unlimited power—a power before given no one," his instruction here bespeaks the possession and performance of that power.[51] At the same time, though, his oral transmission of folk knowledge has deep African roots, and these practical strategies of fugitivity, borne out of experience, were essential to the efficacy of their escape. If Henry's critiques of Christianity in "A Shadow"—wherein he laments how enslavers "use the Scriptures to make you submit" and proposes that "we must now begin to understand the Bible so as to make it of interest to us"—also apply to Conjure, then his own Conjure practice marks a similar appropriation.[52] Indeed, as Chireau shows, "both Conjure and Christianity provided unique resources that addressed diverse cultural needs and interests within African American life," and Henry employs each as they meet his purposes.[53] Conjure, already a cultural assemblage, continues to accumulate meaning through Henry's travels, thus exemplifying the religious novelty paramount to *Blake*'s Black internationalism and modeling how to organize diverse revolutionaries into a diasporic coalition later in Cuba.

The Africanization of Revolution

Written in the mid-1850s, *Blake* responds to intensifying US-American efforts to annex Cuba (e.g., the 1854 Ostend Manifesto) and the failed filibustering missions of Narciso López. "To have Cuba as a United States territory the Americans are determined," Delany wrote for the *North Star*, "but what is to be done to prevent a scheme fraught with such fearful consequences as this project of annexation of Cuba?"[54] *Blake* is his answer. Foreshadowed in its opening chapters, the novel's turn to Cuba in part 2 elaborates its anticolonial arguments and the dual objectives of Henry's revolution: primarily

FIGURE 4.1 *Día de Reyes: The Holy Kings Day. Album pintoresco de la isla de Cuba* (Berlin: B. May y Ca., ca. 1855). Courtesy of Graphic Arts Collection, Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

concerned with annihilating slavery throughout the Americas, his mission must also prevent the annexation of Cuba to the United States, which would further entrench slavery in an expanding US-American Empire.[55]

When Henry arrives in Cuba, he must adapt the lessons learned about vernacular knowledge, religious novelty, and diasporic cultures to the local milieu. Whereas *Blake* relegates Conjure in the US-American South to the Dismal Swamp, for example, the Africanist presence in Cuba literally takes center stage during El Día de los Reyes in "King's Day." The dancing and drums of this sensational business-halting festival consume the streets of Matanzas, creating cover for Henry, Placido, and their coconspirators to convene secretly (see figure 4.1). More than simply providing a distraction, though, the festival's African roots prove equally important to the revolutionaries' covert machinations. Because *Blake* discloses the festivities through the (white) ethnographic gaze of "a popular American literary periodical" from which the narrator quotes, the event appears as a lurid bacchanalia,

brimming with elaborate costumes, lascivious dancing, and unruly masses of *bozales* (Africans) and Afro-Cubans.[56] For white onlookers (whether the Cuban *criollos* or the US-American readers of the newspaper or *Blake*), these scenes physically manifest the threat of Cuba's Africanization: "One cannot help thinking of the menace of the Spanish Government that Cuba shall be either Spanish or African, and when we see these savages in their play more like wild animals than human beings, the idea what their rage would probably be, makes the boldest shudder."[57] The account further insinuates that the Cuban government actively encouraged the performances and that by "prolong[ing] for three days the privilege of the day to the Lucumis, the most warlike of the tribes of the African slaves in Cuba," they effectively terrorized white *criollos* with "the standing threat that Cuba must be Spanish or African."[58] As a spectacular performance of Africanness, then, the festival formed part of a racial-colonial disciplinary apparatus designed to suppress anticolonialism among white *criollos* by activating their fears of racial genocide and insinuating that the holiday's excesses were a faint approximation of what the island's Africanization would bring.

While such fearmongering aimed to temper anticolonial sentiment, *Blake* suggests that it also emboldened antislavery and anticolonial activism among Afro-Cubans. Although the novel reproduces a white ethnographic gaze that renders the festival's performances as hedonistic excesses, it also effectively *holds* that gaze, providing a distraction while the revolutionary conspirators' Grand Council convenes to plan its next steps. Historically, El Día de los Reyes celebrations were organized by *cabildos de nación*, or ethnocentric Afro-Cuban social organizations designed to preserve African languages and cultures and to cultivate a political consciousness. Thus, beyond "imply[ing] . . . a secretive African dimension" in Cuban society that unnerved white audiences and emboldened Black ones, the festival advances *Blake*'s argument that local knowledge and diasporic cultures (here, the sophisticated Yoruba traditions and rituals communicated through drumming and dancing) are vital tools for Black liberation.[59] For example, the passage's allusion to the "warlike" Lucumí (as the prominent Yoruba are known in Cuba) nods to enslaved uprisings around Matanzas, including the alleged conspiracy that became known as La Escalera (1843–44), which resulted in hundreds of enslaved Cubans and their allies (including the real-life Plácido) being executed for supposedly plotting a slave rebellion on Christmas Day—or, put differently, during the lead-up to El Día de los Reyes.[60] Moreover, as Jane Landers notes, the investigations into the conspiracy "uncovered a supposed connection between the free blacks of Matanzas and plantation slaves,

many of whom turned out to be members of the Lucumí nation. . . . The rebellion allegedly involved witchcraft that would render the whites 'stupid' and their weapons useless."[61] The allusion to "witchcraft" here suggests that white *criollo* fears stemmed not only from the robust Lucumí *cabildo* but also from the knowledge that "Lucumí" likewise refers to followers of La Regla Lucumí, a Santería sect endemic to Cuba. Unlike Conjure, which is largely divorced from divinity, La Regla Lucumí is an overtly religious practice that interweaves the Yoruba pantheon with the Catholic canon of saints and martyrs.[62] "Lucumí" therefore aggravates a constellation of white anxieties, including the formalization of Black social networks, the potency of folk knowledge (especially herbology and toxicology), and the Africanization of Cuban institutions, including Catholicism.

As a case study for the political utility of diaspora literacy in *Blake*, reviewing part 2 through the lens of these Africanist presences illuminates how its revolution relies not only on the specter of Cuba's Africanization but on the diasporic forms of vernacular knowledge and power that develop through the island's actual demographic and cultural Africanization, resulting from the continued trafficking of Africans to Cuba. Tellingly, the centerpiece of Henry's plan involves traveling aboard a slave ship (the *Merchantman* of the opening chapters poetically refitted as the *Vulture*), abetting the purchase of kidnapped Africans, fomenting an uprising at sea, and then enlisting those Africans into his Army of Emancipation in Cuba. Two factors complicate this plan. First, the ship's white officers have no intention of transporting their human cargo back to Cuba. Instead, they plan to smuggle them into the United States via Key West, where both the captives and the ship's Black crew would be sold into slavery. Second, just as the rebellion in the *Vulture*'s hold begins, a massive storm interrupts its momentum, allowing the officers to suppress the uprising but forcing them to reroute to Cuba after all. Upon arriving, Henry circulates gossip about the captives' rebelliousness through his extensive social networks to depress auction prices, enabling the Grand Council's agents to purchase the entire cohort, including the characters of Abyssa and Mende, who played key roles in the aborted maritime uprising and whom Placido purchased personally. While the storm metaphorically and narratologically functions as one of divine intervention (deus ex machina), *Blake*'s Christian characters would not be the only ones to appraise it as such. Among the kidnapped Africans in the *Vulture*'s hold, disciples of Yoruba and Dahomean Vodun could have interpreted the gathering storm as the intervention of Changó, the god of fire, thunder, and lightning, who, corresponding to Catholicism's Saint Barbara, became a central

figure in La Regla Lucumí in Cuba.[63] The oral nature of Yoruba and its myriad American adaptations make a concise portrait of Changó challenging to render, but Michele Reid aptly describes him as "a warrior" who symbolizes "power and control over difficulties, but also embodies virility and passion," making him an ideal figure of the impending insurrection.[64] Indeed, as the weather intensifies at the conclusion of "Middle Passage," the Black crew commence a gleeful rendition of J. E. Robinson's "We're for Freedom through the Land" to torment their oppressors. The song quickly develops into a call and response. As the captives sing "We bring light," Henry replies with an imperative "See!" In response, "a vivid flash of lightning was seen in the distance, presently followed by a heavy rumbling of thunder."[65] As if restaging Jehovah's inaugural speech act ("Let there be light!"), the song summons the storms. And yet to interpret this moment within a strictly Christian framework would be incomplete. In fact, the verse that Henry interrupts continues, "We are coming, we are coming! and 'No league with tyrant man,' / Is emblazoned on our banner, while Jehovah leads the van!" Thus, its deliberate truncation excises the reference to the Christian God.[66] This interruption redirects the crew's attention to the thunder and lightning—signifiers of Changó. Consequently, regardless of which god the Black crew or captive Africans worshipped, this pivotal moment evidenced that *their* god heard their pleas.

The distinctive religious interpretations of the storm are not mutually exclusive but rather essential byproducts of the "simultextual" readings that the novel's commitments to diaspora literacy necessitate.[67] The pliability of signification across multiple religions and cultures is essential to the organization of the Army of Emancipation precisely because assembling the African diaspora under the aegis of revolution requires responsiveness to differences among its constituents. *Blake* carefully textures that diversity even aboard the *Vulture*. The aforementioned African characters Abyssa and Mende, for example, play pivotal roles in the maritime insurrection, while metonymically signifying the growing revolution's diverse coalitions. Mende's name recalls the 1839 *Amistad* rebellion, in which captive Mende (an ethnic group from modern Sierra Leone) overthrew the ship's crew and successfully navigated from Cuba to the United States, but *Mendi* was also the Black-owned bark that carried Delany to Liberia at the outset of his 1859 voyage to Africa with the Niger Valley exploring party.[68] Similarly, Abyssa is originally from Sudan before she relocates to "the Eba country" (Ibo or modern Nigeria), a thousand-mile migration that culminates with her being "sold to Dahomi by the Ibadana."[69] Her origins in East Africa, read

alongside the enslavement of West Africans like Mende, chart the slave trade's enduring transcontinental expanse while also providing a cipher for her name: Abyssa alludes to Abyssinia (the colonialist exonym for the Ethiopian Empire), invoking both the ancient history of Christianity in Africa and the Black rhetorical tradition of citing Ethiopia to evidence the atavistic roots of African civilization.[70] Abyssa, herself a convert from Islam to Christianity, therefore represents the deep roots of African Christianity and portends the renewed evangelical efforts Delany espoused in Africa. Significantly, Abyssa converts in the context of her journey from Sudan to Nigeria to West Africa, meaning that hers is a Christianity forged in a transnational, transcultural African context, not an imposition from European colonizers. In this way, she exemplifies both the cultural assemblages endemic to Black diaspora and the religious novelty for which Henry advocates.

Furthermore, *Blake* spotlights several individuals aboard the vessel who, like Abyssa and Henry, can translate across the diaspora's languages, religions, and cultures. Unlike the vertically oriented scenes of instruction and translation witnessed in "Studying Head Work," the revolution's accumulated diversity disperses more evenly the labor of teaching, learning, and practicing diaspora literacy. Before the insurrection at sea begins, for example, an intoxicated white officer hails several Black sailors standing together ("Disperse there, you black clouds! We're not ready for rain!"), to which Gascar—a character Delany models after a spirited "native Greba boy employed on a vessel on the coast of Africa, 1859"—ominously retorts, "But you may have a storm."[71] Delany's "Greba" likely means "Grebo," an ethnolinguistic subgroup of the larger Kru nation in what became Liberia. Because the *Vulture*'s Black crew were "mostly hired slaves," the young Grebo's enslavement critiques Liberia's failure to protect West Africans from the ongoing slave trade.[72] Moreover, Henry directly divulges the significance of individuals like this unnamed Grebo sailor to his enterprise: "I am well acquainted with the native Krumen on the coast, many of the heads of whom speak several European tongues, and as sailing master I can obtain as many as I wish, who will make a powerful force in carrying out my scheme on the vessel."[73] A Kru among the crew, this young Grebo man is not only a witty worker, whose repartee distracts the white officers as the insurrection organizes itself, but also a polyglot, whose linguistic facility enables communication among the diverse Black crew and captives. Positioning him as a universal translator on the ship brings into relief the cutting wit of his joke: his multilingualism transforms disparate Africans and African Americans into an organized revolutionary force ("black clouds" into a "storm" in his metaphoric idiom).[74] In this way,

the Black crew and captives might have viewed the *Vulture* as what Solimar Otero calls "the transatlantic crossroads," where a diasporic deity (Èsù Elegbara in Yoruba, Elegguá in Cuba, and Legba in Haiti and Dahomey) works to "simultaneously intercept and allow communication between different orders of energies in a manner that reorients attention to thresholds and potentiality."[75] Henry and the unnamed Grebo, then, emerge as envoys of Èsù, translating across the "disparate religions [that] converge within common space" of the *Vulture* and thereby "mak[ing] and remak[ing] connections" among revolutionary recruits.[76] These characters help translate the storm's symbolism across different cultures, and in doing so, they literalize the metaphor—the rebellion *is* the gathering storm and vice versa.

Translation, as *Blake* demonstrates, is both a function and an effect of diaspora literacy, and we can further expand the sea storm's simultextuality with Christina Sharpe's meditations on meteorology in the wake of slavery: "In what I am calling the weather, antiblackness is pervasive *as* climate. The weather necessitates changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies. . . . The weather trans*forms Black being. But the shipped, the held, and those in the wake also produce out of the weather their own ecologies. When the only certainty is the weather that produces a pervasive climate of antiblackness, what must we know in order to move through these environments in which the push is always toward Black death?"[77] What we must know, *Blake* posits, is one another. Variously a sign of the disaster of slavery, the impending revolution, and the righteous anger of Jehovah/Changó, the storm that disrupts the *Vulture*'s voyage also disrupts the climate of anti-Blackness against which *Blake* rages. Aboard the ship and in its hold, we see diaspora literacy facilitating the development of a new ecology: the forging of Blackness in the crucible of crisis, across and through difference. Indeed, Sharpe's sense of ecology here ("the branch of biology that deals with relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings; the political movement that seeks to protect the environment, especially from pollution") provides an apt complement to Delany's favorite metaphor for Henry's project: "sowing the seeds of future devastation."[78] The storm—read through the simultextuality of diaspora literacy—soaks the fecund, expansive terrain of *Blake*'s narrative landscapes, accelerating its revolutionary germination and cultivating a diasporic ecology of resistance within the total climate of anti-Blackness.

Ultimately, *Blake*'s political imagination transforms Africanization from a white supremacist bugbear into a diasporic praxis that could challenge Manifest Destiny's imperial enterprise. For white US-Americans, this

prospect provoked fears of multiplying Black revolutions, Black governments, and Black culture in the Americas—what we might, in a longer view of U.S.-Cuba relations, understand as akin to the Domino Theory of the Cold War. *Blake* animates and aggravates these anxieties by drawing a direct line between African cultures and transnational Black revolution. But for the predominantly Black readers of the *Anglo-African Magazine* and the *Weekly Anglo-African*, *Blake* demonstrates how the Africanization of Cuba models a strategy for building and sustaining transnational Black coalitions rooted in cultural pluralism and routed through the diasporic networks that bind the Black Atlantic.[79] Much like "Africa"—as both a continent and a concept—contains multitudes, *Blake*'s multinational Army of Emancipation recognizes the utility in both unity and diversity. The Africanization of Cuba, then, represented the hope of Black liberation and perhaps even a Black hemisphere.

From Coalitions to Conventions

Despite its spectacular plot and robust political imagination, *Blake* is also a surprisingly practical text, deeply influenced by Delany's own experiences as an organizer. The novel carefully attends to the quotidian minutiae of Black revolution, especially in its detailed descriptions of the Grand Council scheduling gatherings, advertising meetings, setting agendas, electing committees and officers, debating actions, reciting poetry, and performing speeches. Structurally and aesthetically, these sections more closely resemble convention proceedings than the literary tropes of romanticism, sentimentalism, and social realism. The *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention* (1854), for example, begin with a call to order, nominations for presiders and secretaries, an invocation by Elder W. C. Munroe, and a series of elections (including voting Delany as chair) before moving into resolutions and speeches. Similarly, in "The Grand Council," Delany enumerates the names and appointed positions of minor characters who appear only here before launching into the aforementioned debate over the invocational prayer and the speeches that comprise the meeting.

As John Ernest notes, compiling these records into published proceedings reveals "the status of history as collective performance" geared toward "assembling the scattered lives and scattered documents of African American experience to promote a common historical consciousness."[80] It is, in other words, a practice of diaspora—of pulling together fragments into a self-styled whole, circulating evidence of diasporic collaborations to facilitate

future manifestations of such relations—that I have elsewhere described as "autoarchiving."[81] In *Blake*, the adaptation of convention proceedings' highly stylized literary form promotes a diasporic consciousness that facilitates the physical and philosophical organization of a transnational Black revolution.[82] The novel aesthetically structures Delany's activist experiences such that he could not present political organizing in *Blake* without harking back to the many conventions he assembled and attended. In doing so, he rightly recognizes how lived experiences of diaspora shaped the conventions movement, narrating improvisations of its formal dimensions throughout the geopolitical terrain of *Blake* and ultimately framing the conventions movement as an "Africanized" form of democracy. The Grand Council's secret meeting in part 2, for example, reinstantiates the prematurely exposed conspiratorial gathering in New Orleans in part 1, as each happens covertly during an ostentatious cultural festival (Mardi Gras and El Día de los Reyes, respectively). Similarly, the council's appointed executive committee recalls not only convention elections but also the Seven Heads of the Dismal Swamp. Finally, the council's reliance on informal networks of "gad and gossip" for the circulation of news, information, and intelligence—including Gofer Gondolier's vital reconnaissance in the Captain General's palace, Ailcey's reconnaissance as an invisible presence in the Franks' Great House, and Mammy Judy and Daddy Joe's hut serving as an information hub for enslaved families in Natchez—resemble conventions' reliance on circulation through both Black social networks and print culture. In suggesting that Delany viewed conventions as an "Africanized" form of democracy and citizenship, we can begin to trace how diaspora shapes politics in local contexts while nevertheless recalling similar formations throughout the Black Atlantic.

In what follows, I argue that the 1872 meeting of the CASS in New York extends *Blake*'s vision for how the Africanization of white institutions employs and furthers a practice of diaspora for using diverse lived experiences to form the basis of Black internationalist solidarity and organizing. The convention took place on 13 December 1872, when crowds of Black US-Americans and Cuban exiles congregated together in the bustling warmth of the Cooper Institute to show their support for the Cuban Liberation Army, which was currently waging an anticolonial revolution against Spain in what became known as the Ten Years' War. After the New Year, the CASS compiled proceedings along with the convention's call for delegates, news coverage of the event, and even minutes from a follow-up meeting in Boston some days later; these materials were collated into a forty-two-page pamphlet titled *Slavery in Cuba* (1873). Like *Blake*, these proceedings promote strategies

for both national and diasporic political action, revealing how the vestigial networks and tactics of Black abolitionism evolved to meet new challenges after the Civil War and created space for newly enfranchised Black citizens to express distinct perspectives on international issues. By exercising their voices to support Cubans' anticolonial struggle, the convention's participants demanded recognition as viable political actors in a recently restored union.

My reading of *Slavery in Cuba* contextualizes this convention within a larger public discourse on Cuban belligerency rights, including two meetings held in the same auditorium two years before. Significantly, the CASS foregrounds slavery, whereas the 1870 meetings wholly elided it. These earlier meetings betrayed deep investments in the United States' imperialist paternalism toward the "underdeveloped" geographies southward, ideologies articulated most directly through aggressive, interventionist manifestations of the Monroe Doctrine resulting from the achievements and now extracontinental ambitions of Manifest Destiny, which shaped US-American foreign policy in the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond. By contrast, the CASS's appeals for emancipating enslaved Black populations throughout the hemisphere imagines a model of trans-American relations alternative to the paradoxically anticolonial (independence from European empires) and neocolonial (economic dependence on the United States) logics embedded within the Monroe Doctrine. Amid the white backlash against Reconstruction and the ugly evolutions of institutional racism in the postbellum United States, the CASS urgently understood that Black citizens could not feel secure in their own freedom until slavery was abolished globally. *Slavery in Cuba* therefore models a diasporic praxis and an Africanized foreign policy in which the abstract ideologies of Black internationalism become material solidarities between African Americans in the United States and those in Cuba, and in which Black liberation—not US-American imperialism—is the shared ethical imperative.

Antislavery and Anticolonialism in Cuba

Unlike the Haitian Revolution, which intimately wed the projects of emancipation and decolonization, a messier relationship between antislavery and anticolonialism existed in Cuba. Throughout the 1830s, many Cuban reformists argued that ending the illegal slave trade and abolishing slavery on the island (as a gradual process including indemnification for enslavers) were key to Cuba's future. While some believed these ends could be accomplished

without severing ties with Spain, an emerging sense of Cuban nationalism produced (at least) two competing schools of thought: annexationists, who favored becoming a US-American state, and separatists, who favored independence. When the extreme spectacles of La Escalera decimated Cuba's antislavery movement and intimated proto-nationalists seeking decolonization in the 1840s, momentum swung strongly in favor of annexation—the safest perceived means of avoiding further draconian violence from the Spanish colonial government. Proponents cited disparate rationales, though. Proslavery factions in Cuba believed US-American statehood would protect slavery on the island, while abolitionists believed the United States' own growing antislavery movement (evidenced by the international successes of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) would facilitate and accelerate Cuban emancipation.

With the Civil War, however, Cuban relations with its neighbor entered a new stage. As the United States pivoted briefly away from expansionist fantasies and toward Reconstruction, annexing Cuba was no longer practical, since the abolition of slavery in the United States meant that incorporating Cuba into the nation would entail manumitting its enslaved population and stewarding its unstable plantation economy into a wage-labor system. Annexationist fervor in Cuba faded correspondingly, as the white *criollo* elite became increasingly resentful toward Spain in the 1860s, strengthening a nationalist consciousness and separatist sentiments on the island.[83] Tensions between Cubans and the colonial administration peaked in 1867, when white *criollo* representatives appointed to the Spanish Junta de Información (Information Board) petitioned for new tariff policies to alleviate the island's economic depression as sugar prices plummeted. They found no traction in the metropole, however, as Madrid responded by disbanding the Junta de Información and levying a devastating tax on the colony. This latest incidence of Spanish hostility and neglect toward Cuban interests incited many nationalists to shift their aims from reform to revolution. On 10 October 1868, *criollo* Carlos Manuel de Céspedes delivered a passionate proclamation of independence, and within weeks, he coordinated the loosely connected pockets of resistance in the island's eastern provinces into an all-out rebellion against Spain.

While this anticolonial insurgency and the Spanish repression would come to be known as the Ten Years' War, this is misleading. Despite the initial fervor, the rebellion was highly localized and began hemorrhaging support by 1870, largely due to the increasingly multiracial composition of the Cuban Liberation Army. Unlike the sprawling, thriving *ingenios* (sugar plantations) of western Cuba, where free and enslaved Afro-descended people

constituted a demographic majority, in the eastern provinces where the insurgency took hold, most of the population was white-identified, and slavery was largely obsolete. "Nothing could be more misleading," Franklin Knight contends, "than to think that slavery was an important factor contributing to the outbreak of the civil war in Cuba."[84] But because Céspedes launched the revolution by performatively liberating the dozens of people he himself enslaved, the uprising appealed to enslaved Cubans who viewed anticolonialism as a viable route to freedom. Ambivalent about the prospect of emancipation, however, the revolutionaries spent the rebellion's early years promoting gradualist, means-tested, and highly contingent forms of emancipation in a calculated effort to recruit enslaved Cubans without alienating white *criollos*. Though these short-lived and largely impotent policies exerted little influence on Cuban slavery, Ada Ferrer argues that they nevertheless "offered slaves peculiar and circumscribed forms of freedom and citizenship" and a "concrete form to the idea of racial equality" that augmented Black participation and leadership in the revolution.[85] As the revolution became more demographically and ideologically Black, though, white *criollos* who "were familiar with the premise that Cuba would either be a Spanish colony or an African island nation in the image of Haiti" rapidly abandoned the cause.[86] In other words, the specter of Cuba's "Africanization" became central not only to international concerns over the colony's future, but as the Cuban Liberation Army became increasingly multiracial, this possibility began enervating the anticolonial momentum of the revolution on the island.

Despite the revolution's progressively Black character and despite lingering US-American uneasiness that Cuba could become the second Black republic in the Caribbean (after Haiti), Cuban decolonization was widely supported in the United States. Popular backing for Cuban independence aligned with the "America for the Americans" ethos of the Monroe Doctrine, which, as Marlene Daut argues, increasingly became "a synecdoche for the kinds of racial-imperial policies" of US-American interventionism and paternalism in the second half of the nineteenth century.[87] Here, for instance, the Monroe Doctrine not only justified the United States' supporting Cuban decolonization from Spain but also mandated a role for the United States in shaping Cuba's future—whether as a state or as a dependency. Although the Grant administration affirmed US-American neutrality in 1869, pressure began mounting for the federal government to recognize free Cuba. New York City was the movement's center. Not only did the state government break with President Grant to recognize Cuba's belligerency rights in January 1870, but among the city's robust Cuban immigrant and exile enclaves, support

for independence was growing. Later that month, a "mixed audience" packed the Cooper Institute to hear an impressive lineup of advertised speakers. To the dismay of the event's organizer—*New York Tribune* editor and 1872 presidential hopeful Horace Greeley—only Cassius Clay turned out to address the eager audience, and his appeals on behalf of Cuba conspicuously circumvented any discussion of slavery.[88] Instead, Clay proposed a series of resolutions justifying US-American support for Cuba in the language of paternalistic foreign policy and hemispheric dominion. He explicitly invokes "the Monroe doctrine, that European monarchies ought not to be allowed to extend their acquisitions of territory and political power in the American hemisphere" to establish the grounds for hemispheric solidarity between the United States and Cuba. Using the Manichean juxtaposition of New World republicanism and Old World tyranny, he casts Spanish rule as "dangerous" not only because its retrograde monarchy oppressed free Americans (Cubans) whose ideals were inherited from "our fathers of 1776" but also because it threatened "our peace and safety."[89] The slippery "our" here—used both to distinguish the United States from Cuba and to name their intertwined fates—renders the collective interests of the Western Hemisphere and US-American interests in that hemisphere coextensive. On the one hand, this slippage authorized the United States' intervention into Cuban affairs (*their* interests are *our* interests); on the other hand, if the Cubans successfully decolonized, this slippage authorized the United States' neocolonial oversight of the island's early nationhood, possibly through military intervention, occupation, or even eventual annexation, since it was, after all, the US-American War of Independence ("*our* fathers of 1776") that Clay claims inspired its Cuban counterpart.

Just over two months later, white New York publisher Douglas Taylor convened a meeting of the Cuban League of the United States in the same auditorium. Despite the inclement weather, "an enthusiastic audience" turned out to hear speakers—including New York City mayor Abraham Oakey Hall—proclaim their sympathy for free Cuba.[90] The evening's addresses, punctuated with performances by the Seventy-First Regiment Band, concluded with Ethan Allen's submission of several prolix resolutions for the league's consideration. In one of many striking similarities with the January assembly, Allen invokes the hemispheric logic of "that policy applauded and defended by us all, which was enunciated by President Monroe," and rehearses a similar patrilineal political genealogy of the Americas. The "Cuban patriots'" anticolonial struggle "repeats so nearly a part of their own history" that "the people of the United States cannot afford to oppose those contending for liberty under this Declaration of Rights, unless they are ready

to repudiate the illustrious fathers of our own Revolution, whose example, both in word and in deed, the Cubans have so neatly followed."[91] Unlike the January meeting, though, the league did assume an official position on slavery. In one resolution, Allen quotes from a translation of Céspedes's "Manifiesto": "We desire the gradual abolition of slavery with indemnification: we admire universal suffrage, as it insures the sovereignty of the people; we demand a religious regard for the inalienable rights of man, as the basis of freedom and national greatness."[92] This translation is misleading, however, as it transforms the specific goals of Cuban independence in the original "Manifiesto" into the familiar idioms of a US-American political tradition. Although Céspedes's original phrase "los derechos imprescriptibles" deliberately avoids the cognate *inalienables*, for example, the English translation evokes the Declaration of Independence with "the inalienable rights of man." Similarly, "Manifiesto" narrates the decolonization of Cuba as "constituyéndonos en nación independiente, porque así cumple a la grandeza de nuestros futuros destinos [constituting us as an independent nation, thereby achieving the greatness of our future destiny]," whereas Allen's version flatly refuses the Cuban appropriation of Manifest Destiny and excises the allusion to Cuban independence, reducing this sentiment to a celebration of "freedom and national greatness" that could easily be consolidated into Manifest Destiny's framing of the United States' promised hemispheric dominion.[93]

This translation subsumes a pronouncement of Cuban self-determination into the Monroe Doctrine's professions of hemispheric solidarity, revealing the insidious irony of narrating this revolution as a modern manifestation of 1776: "The great Republic of America," as one of the forum's speakers called the United States, "must do something to strike off those fetters" from Cuba, establishing an intransigent hierarchy among American republics that the Monroe Doctrine's protectionist rhetoric strategically downplayed.[94] As the image of Cuba in chains suggests, the United States' self-styled "national greatness" here turns on an infuriatingly revisionist narrative of the United States as a progressive abolitionist nation that was always committed to the cause of universal freedom, whereas Cuba's colonial ties to Spain allowed slavery to endure there. By framing Cuban anticolonialism as ideologically indebted to the United States, these resolutions authorize the United States' paternalistic intervention and thereby delimit Cuba's path forward to one that aligns with US-American interests.

As previously discussed, the United States' self-nomination to nurture Cuba into an American republic was not only about affirming the exceptionalist mythology of Manifest Destiny or the hemispheric political hegemony

of the Monroe Doctrine; it also entailed the anxious proleptic obviation of the island becoming a Black republic. An unanticipated effect of cultivating the discourse on these terms, however, was how the vaunted spectral Africanization of Cuba inspired a parallel Black solidarity movement in the United States. As Paul Ortiz documents, Black activists who empathized with Cuba's anticolonial struggle more broadly and Afro-Cubans' freedom struggle specifically used ongoing public debates over US-American foreign policy toward the island "to build a nationwide Cuban solidarity movement based on the principles of emancipatory internationalism."[95] While certainly not the first postbellum expression of such sentiments, the 1872 gathering of Black organizers from the Cuban Anti-Slavery Society marked a turning point. Just two weeks after President Grant's State of the Union Address reaffirmed the United States' neutrality toward the revolution, the CASS convened Black activists and Cuban exiles to proclaim their sympathy for the rebellion, lionize its abolitionist rhetoric, and press the Grant administration to recognize the Cuban Liberation Army's belligerency rights. A Civil War veteran, onetime secretary of the Black National Liberal Republican Committee, and an inventor boasting eight different patents, Samuel R. Scottron reached out to Henry Highland Garnet for assistance arranging the meeting.[96] Garnet's established reputation and Black internationalist credentials made him an ideal collaborator. Most importantly, though, Garnet's renown as a theatrical firebrand guaranteed to draw crowds to the Cooper Institute, and his address formed the convention's centerpiece. Enslaved at birth, Garnet and his family escaped from a Maryland plantation when he was nine and settled in New York, where he was educated at the African Free School alongside fellow future Pan-Africanist Alexander Crummell, George Downing (father of CASS organizer, Peter Downing), and James McCune Smith.[97] In 1828, he had the opportunity to work and travel at sea, including two voyages to Cuba. Whatever sense of freedom might have allowed Garnet to romanticize travel during these trips was quickly disrupted upon his return, however. When he arrived back in New York, he learned that his family had scattered under the hot pursuit of Southern patrols seeking to reenslave them. This lesson subsequently defined his next five decades of activism, during which he traveled throughout the Atlantic world: lecturing in Europe in the 1840s, preaching in Jamaica in the early 1850s, and serving as an appointed minister to Liberia in 1881, where he died two months after his arrival. Garnet's commitments to "internationalizing the struggle" for freedom amounted to the adage that slavery anywhere—to paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr.—was a danger to freedom everywhere.[98]

By articulating an ethics of solidarity in which US-American abolition catalyzed an imperative commitment to laboring toward liberation throughout the African diaspora, however, *Slavery in Cuba* occasionally betrays its ingrained investments in US-American exceptionalism and a sometimes stratified vision of Black internationalism. Echoing its precirculated announcement, the CASS's mission statement hails its constituency as the "Colored People of the United States," but as it continues, it performs a strange dance between racial identification and racial disavowal. On the one hand, its "painful interest" in Cuban slavery bespeaks an acute compassion for the struggles of all enslaved peoples, rooted in "our own experience of the evil effects of slavery in this country." It is an empathic identification with "five hundred thousand of our brethren" that emerges "very naturally" from the shared history and ancestry that Garnet elaborates; a more egalitarian (though still masculinized) bond of fraternity that supersedes the paternalistic sympathy registered in the white-organized meetings supporting Cuba. On the other hand, this mission statement temporally distances Black US-Americans ("our own condition *in the past*") from those in Cuba ("*now* held as slaves in the island of Cuba"), locating the former in a more advanced position on the progressive timeline of Civilization.

The preface indulges a subjunctive counterfactual that underscores this distance: "Were it not for the fact above alluded to, of our own condition in the past, we feel nevertheless that as intelligent citizens, having the cause of human freedom deeply implanted within us, the information we have from daily journals and official correspondence, both of our Government and the Government of Great Britain, on the affairs of that island, would have suggested to us the propriety of some movement on our part in the interest of freedom, humanity and [C]hristian civilization, which we believe should be the especial care of all good people."[99] Tabling, temporarily, the facts of transatlantic slavery and ancestral bonds, the CASS locates its alliance with enslaved Cubans in an unraced ethics of civic duty. Having "so recently been invested with the rights of citizens of our Republic," Black US-Americans were eager to exercise those rights by reading current events in "daily journals," engaging in foreign policy debates, and advocating for extending "freedom, humanity and [C]hristian civilization" abroad. Put differently, this counterfactual explicitly argues that "the cause of human freedom deeply implanted within us" did not stem from their racialized experiences of enslavement, displacement, and subjugation but from the republican ideals of the United States to which they had recently gained access as fully enfranchised citizens.[100]

The resolutions announced in the convention's precirculated advertisement preserve this uneasy tension between Black internationalism, on the one hand, and conspicuously unraced US-American nationalism on the other. Like abolitionist strategies of bookending antebellum slave narratives with authenticating paratexts, the CASS's "careful survey of the situation, as collected from official correspondence and other information and evidences of the condition and disposition of the respective combatants" and its self-conscious inclusion of many of these documents in *Slavery in Cuba* frame its resolutions as the informed conclusions of responsible citizens. While this rhetorical strategy proleptically counters white skepticism that the CASS's support for the Cuban rebels emerged uncritically from racial affinities, the language of civic duty also authorizes a vision of Black internationalism forged in the crucible of what Ifeoma Nwankwo calls "twice doubled consciousness": the vision of Black US-Americans as not only torn between identifying as US-American and as Black within the United States (what W. E. B. DuBois famously calls "double consciousness") but also torn between a national identity (US-American) and a transnational diasporic identity (Black).[101] Informed by current events and historical context, the CASS frames its intervention into this national debate in terms of the first amendment, enacting popular sovereignty by practicing its rights to assemble at the convention, to challenge foreign policy through free speech, to publish the proceedings through a free press, and to petition directly to President Grant on the subject. If invoking its long overdue access to the protections of the Bill of Rights stresses a universalized conception of national citizenship, though, then its subsequent invocation of more recent constitutional amendments emphasizes the pitfalls of practicing citizenship without attending to race. The CASS's support of the revolution depends on the belief that "the success of the Cuban patriots will immediately give to the whole inhabitants of the island, freedom and equality before the law," a deliberate paraphrasing of the Fourteenth Amendment.[102]

These tensions continued in Garnet's address to the convention, where, like Delany before him, his appeals for collaboration between Black US-Americans and enslaved Cubans employ the poet Plácido as a hinge between cultures. Plácido had become a cause célèbre for antislavery activists in the United States, who framed his execution for allegedly masterminding a slave rebellion in 1844 as his martyrdom for both the Afro-Cuban freedom struggle and the transatlantic struggle against slavery.[103] By 1872, the poet's name provided shorthand for Black liberation's hemispheric ambit and a historical basis for the current calls for collaboration. "You cannot forget,

Cubans," Garnet states, "the immortal mulatto poet of your country, the brave and heroic Placido," who symbolized not only a transnational antislavery ideology but also nascent Cuban nationalism and courageous resistance against an oppressive colonial administration.[104] This allusion to Plácido was not Garnet's first. He had also invoked the poet in an 1848 address before the Female Benevolent Society in Troy, New York. In that speech, Garnet followed a survey of the continued illegal slave trade through Cuba by observing that "recently, a great sacrifice has been made in that Island to the Spirit of despotism, in the death of the Patriot and Poet, Placido." He then rehearses the familiar narrative of Plácido's arrest, conviction, and execution, a memorial culminating with a recital of a poem titled "O Liberty!" that Garnet misattributes to Plácido.[105] The first stanza reads:

> O Liberty! I wait for thee,
> To break this chain, and dungeon bar;
> I hear thy voice calling me,
> Deep in the frozen North, afar,
> With voice like God's, and vision like a star.[106]

Tellingly, Garnet's CASS address alters a verse from this previous version, excising the second line of the poem and combining its first and third lines: "O, Liberty! I hear thy voice calling me." Omitting the second line is especially curious since "to break this chain" links Plácido's anticolonial patriotism (the "chain" and "dungeon" as the literal confines of his own imprisonment by colonial authorities) to abolitionism (the chains of slavery), a connection that would reinforce his pluralistic symbolism for the diverse crowd at the Cooper Institute. Furthermore, Garnet lengthens the fourth line to "Deep in the frozen regions of the North, afar," updating the poem's vision of political solidarity for the current moment. Beyond nodding to climatological differences between the United States and Cuba (a popular literary trope among Caribbean immigrants in New York), "frozen" in the 1848 version connotes the liberationist energy of "Liberty" lying dormant ("frozen" in place) in the United States. By 1872, though, that same adjective connotes the United States' cold indifference to the Cuban freedom struggle and the stasis of its foreign policy. At the same time, this revision clarifies that "frozen" now describes only "*regions* of the North," not the entire United States, a modest modification that recognizes mounting US-American support for Cuba, especially among African Americans. Cuba no longer needed to "wait for" the "frozen North" as they had in 1848—waiting that resulted in the disastrous filibustering missions of Narciso López that

same year—because in 1872, Cubans could "hear the voice" of Black US-Americans "calling" them, guiding Cuba to liberty as the North Star had guided enslaved people in the US-American South to freedom. Together, these forces could thaw the remaining "frozen regions of the North" (most pointedly, the Grant administration) and bolster Cuba's fight for emancipation and independence.[107]

Delivered only a few years after Plácido's execution, Garnet's 1848 address lays the foundation for transnational collaboration through collective mourning that sees its payoff in the "Bravo, and long continued cheers" that his invocation of the poet catalyzed in 1872.[108] "His noble soul was moved with pity as he saw his fellow men in chains," he eulogizes, presaging the CASS's later sympathy for "five hundred thousand of our brethren" enslaved in Cuba. Read backward from 1872, in fact, this characterization of Plácido's pity proved a worthy example for postbellum Black US-Americans. If Black liberation is unbounded by political borders, then so too is Black grief borne out of that struggle: "The waves of the Atlantic, of whose vastness and sublimity [Plácido] had sung, chaunted his dirge as the tyrants hid him in the grave!"[109] An archaic spelling of *chant*, "chaunt" can also be read as a portmanteau of *chant* and *haunt*, transforming this description of waves singing from pathetic fallacy into a somber recognition of the Atlantic as a mass grave from which a choir of ancestral African spirits mourn Plácido's martyrdom. Sympathy and solidarity are the ebb and flow of diaspora in action, the tides that roll the waves of the Black Atlantic. Garnet returns to this oceanic imagery in his CASS address. "Slavery," he proclaims, "shall be blotted out from every island in the Western Sea, as it has been banished from the Western Continent. The shores of our Republic shall not be washed by the waves made bloody by Cuban slavery."[110] Speaking of the promises and perils of trans-Americanism, Garnet productively distinguishes diasporic affiliations from the neocolonialist foreign policy his white contemporaries championed. On first pass, for instance, what we might call the "Garnet Doctrine" seemingly just refashions the Monroe Doctrine, preserving the familiar spatial arrangement of continent and islands and recasting the imperialist core-periphery mold of hemispheric relations in terms of emancipation rather than expansionism. Indeed, the homogenizing modifier "Western" creates a parallelism between the metropole ("Western Continent" or mainland) and the colonial orbit ("Western Sea" or islands), consolidating the Americas under the unifying rhetoric of republicanism (versus European monarchism) and through the plural possessive "our." This language suggests that "emancipation" could be an equally effective top-down model for hemispheric

relations, rooted in a Black vision of universal abolitionism rather than the Monroe Doctrine's exploitative paternalism or Manifest Destiny's expansionism. Refracted through the prism of Garnet's earlier oceanic imagery, however, this Black liberationist revision of intrahemispheric influence is not a hierarchical core-periphery model but rather a multidirectional tidal model. As Derrick Spires observes, "Tropes of circulation—blood, power, people, water, and texts"—were mainstays of convention proceedings, as they enabled theorizations of "political participation as a shared, vital moving substance."[111] Just as tides do not flow unidirectionally, neither do people, print, and politics between the continent and the island, evidenced by both the moral investments in Cuban abolitionism among Black US-Americans and the physical presence of Cuban exiles in the Cooper Institute.

The different movements of the word "washed" further elaborate Garnet's philosophy here. Understood in its primary definition ("to cleanse by means of water"), "shall not be washed" is an example of litotes—a rhetorical understatement of "shall be stained"—that potently conflates the moral and ecological pollution of slavery.[112] The phrase demands both a figurative and a literal reading of the Caribbean Sea as adulterated with the blood of transatlantic slavery. In addition to bearing symbolic traces of racialized violence, there are physical traces: "The atoms of those people who were thrown overboard are out there in the ocean even today," as Christina Sharpe explains, because the nutrients and energy of human bodies take millions of years to decompose in the ocean. Garnet articulates the basis of Black US-American foreign policy in "the residence time of the wake," in which unrecovered African ancestors connect the past to the present, physiologically and politically transforming the Caribbean Sea into what Nancy Morejón calls an "invisible center" of "African-America" that links Black people in the United States and Cuba to one another and to the entire diaspora.[113] When understood as the physical crashing of water on the shores, though ("to flow over or past; to beat upon; to touch, adjoin"), the phrase "shall not be washed" also entails a refusal and a moral imperative.[114] Just like the Straits of Florida's waves cannot literally be stopped, the CASS has no formal authority to end slavery in Cuba. As a rhetorical refusal that recognizes its own limitations, however, Garnet's negation also recognizes the CASS's power as a *parallel politics* of Black foreign policy that can undermine, circumvent, or even alter official US-American foreign policy (a policy of increasingly intransigent neutrality toward the Cuban revolution).[115] Moreover, the point that bloody waves *cannot* wash "the shores of our Republic" suggests that waves *washed*

of that blood might; that is, a free Cuba in which slavery is abolished might exert a positive, cleansing influence on the United States.

By refusing solidarity based strictly on the inevitable ebbs and flows of tides on opposite coasts of the Straits of Florida, Garnet's rich metaphor transforms those tides into "waves of decolonization" that can "expose the unsatisfied character of freedom and democracy" and "link domestic struggles for equality to broader global struggles against empire."[116] Beyond supporting the independence of Cuba, advocating for the emancipation of enslaved Cubans, and protecting themselves, then, the CASS also identifies the island's prospective decolonization as an experiment in multiracial democracy with a dramatically more diverse population than that of the United States. Rather than imagining decolonization as a neocolonialist extension of the ideals, rights, and protections of US-American republicanism beyond national borders, the CASS understood hemispheric emancipation as essential to the preservation of Black citizenship in the United States. The failure of the Cuban insurrection, it argued, would "rivet more firmly the chains of slavery on our brethren," while potentially also "re-establishing it where it does not now exist, restoring the horrors of the African slave trade and the Coolie traffic, and indefinitely postpon[ing] the abolition of the worst evils that ever disgraced an enlightened and Christian age."[117] Considering the tenuous status of Black citizenship in the postbellum era, Spain's successful reinstitution of slavery in Cuba would set a dangerous precedent whose frightful potential was already intimated in early Southern resistance to Reconstruction, including the legal foundations of Jim Crow and the extralegal terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan. Moreover, the CASS perspicaciously perceived that replacing the African slave trade with the "Coolie traffic" in Cuba would inspire the expansion of forced Chinese labor in the US-American West, once more using racialized labor to racialize (rather than universalize) citizenship rights.[118] If white nationalist know-your-place aggression against Black advancement signaled the (ongoing) challenge of the United States becoming a true multiracial democracy, then early signs from Cuban decolonization efforts provided more promising portents. "As the color line in the United States grew more and more rigid, and as the consequences for crossing that line became more and more brutal," Ada Ferrer observes, "a revolutionary movement in Cuba appeared willing, sometimes eager, to eradicate those lines in Cuba."[119] The diasporic praxis of Black liberation that emerges out of the CASS convention, then, recognizes a multidirectional flow of political and cultural influence rather than the top-down model that the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny promote. Largely

(though not entirely) eschewing the hubris of US-American exceptionalism, the CASS promotes Black solidarity with Cuba as an ethical imperative that not only committed to emancipating enslaved Cubans and buttressing the citizenship rights of Black US-Americans but also prompted a transnational, multilateral reevaluation of what national, hemispheric, and diasporic citizenship *could* look like.

Conclusion

Slavery in Cuba was published sometime between 20 January (the latest dated news coverage included therein) and 14 February 1873, and it included the precirculated call, excerpts from speeches delivered during the convention, a poem read by M. P. Whittom, an embedded shorter pamphlet on Cuban slavery "prepared in Great Britain, for the use of the British Parliament," official correspondence between the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the second Earl Granville, a policy statement from Secretary of State Hamilton Fish directed at the Spanish minister, news coverage of the convention from several New York dailies, and minutes from a subsequent meeting in Boston.[120] While the precise print run of *Slavery in Cuba* is uncertain, the pamphlet and news of the convention traveled widely, and the CASS's robust investment in continuing the momentum from the December meeting demonstrates the payoff of its practices of diaspora. The CASS sold copies out of its New York office but also sent copies to influential friends—like the social reformer and philanthropist Gerrit Smith, who offered both a donation ("a few hundred dollars") and an endorsement: "Your Society, in its great work of enlightening and directing the public sentiment, will need money to pay printers and lecturers. I trust that many will contribute to supply this need."[121] At least some of these funds were used to print a broadside of Smith's letter, but much of the money underwrote subsequent conventions. Scottron and CASS secretary Charles Pindell arranged a meeting in Baltimore two months later (Garnet was slated to speak but was "detained from being present"), and members of the publishing committee like Pindell (Boston), Isaiah C. Wears (Philadelphia), and John A. Gray (Washington, D.C.) went on to organize events in their cities.[122] In addition to *Slavery in Cuba* reprinting coverage of the December convention from the *Evening Mail*, the *New York Sun*, and the *New York Herald*, the CASS also relied on the Black press: the San Francisco *Elevator* noticed its widespread organizing efforts in February 1873, and Frederick Douglass "earnestly ask[ed] the attention of the colored people of this country to the condition of affairs in Cuba,"

entreating readers of his *New National Era* to "join their fortunes with those of their suffering [Cuban] brethren in this hour."[123]

The purpose of these subsequent meetings, Paul Ortiz notes, was to organize a robust petition drive aimed directly at President Grant, and in this regard, the campaign was a remarkable success.[124] Beyond linking the parallel political organization of Black conventions directly into the machinery of the federal government, this meeting exposed growing tensions between the Republican Grant administration and one of the party's primary constituencies (Black voters). Black citizens were in a unique position to pressure the administration in this moment. Though Grant had just been convincingly reelected, his opponent the previous fall—former abolitionist Horace Greeley—turned a failed attempt at rallying a liberal faction of Republicans away from the party into the Democratic nomination. Threatening to form a coalition of anti-Grant Republicans and Democrats into a successful presidential bid, Greeley attempted to leverage his antislavery credentials with Black voters. Although Black voters overwhelmingly supported Grant because, as DuBois argues, "the only alternative offered the Negroes was to vote for their own disenfranchisement," some—including Scottron—were at least intrigued by Greeley's campaign, writing him directly to praise his abolitionist labors and to inquire "what will be the policy of your administration toward the colored people of the country[?]"[125] Greeley's modest successes in courting Black voters applied pressure to the Grant administration, emboldening the CASS to hold the president accountable to Black voters and channel the political tributaries of the Black conventions movement directly into the White House. As the *New York Herald* article documenting the CASS convention and reprinted in *Slavery in Cuba* immediately recognized, "The voice of this Cooper Institute meeting is the voice of all our citizens of African descent, including especially those four millions lately released from the shackles of slavery, and invested with all the rights and privileges of civil and political equality."[126] Aware of its metonymic capacity to exploit white society's tendency to regard any Black collective expression as representing the views of all Black people, the CASS leverages what Dickson D. Bruce calls the "authoritative voice" of Black US-Americans to reshape "processes of democratization and the nature of the public realm."[127] This electoral clout was evident in the CASS petitions. In early 1873, a CASS delegation met face-to-face with Grant and delivered "a petition numerously signed, praying that the government accord belligerent rights to Cuba"; and as the *Virginius* scandal climaxed in November, Scottron and Garnet were slated to meet with Grant again, this time presenting him "a petition signed

by over six hundred thousand colored men in every State of the Union, praying for belligerent rights to Cubans."[128] If the rhetorical flourishes of Garnet's Black internationalism enlivened the CASS convention itself, then the continued organizing, petitioning, and meetings with Grant entailed concrete efforts to materialize its diasporic practices into foreign policy.

Like so many of the ambitious intellectual, socioeconomic, and political innovations of Black Reconstruction, however, the CASS's efforts were blunted by the reentrenchment of white supremacy. Even as President Grant listened attentively to the CASS delegation and even as his secretary of state, Hamilton Fish, read Garnet's speech in *Slavery in Cuba* and cited it in official dealings with the colonial government of Cuba, the United States never recognized Cuba's belligerency rights.[129] The Cuba Liberation Army eventually reached an armistice with Spain in 1878, and slavery survived on the island into the 1880s. Cuba would not achieve independence until 1898, but it was short-lived—the continued US-American occupation of the island eventually resulted in the exploitative Platt Amendment (1901), establishing an enduring neocolonial tenor to US-Cuba relations.

Like *Blake*'s transnational revolution, then, the impact of the CASS was prematurely pruned and therefore, to some extent, fruitless. Although unrealized, its collective explorations of how the Africanization of Cuba might lay the groundwork for Black internationalist foreign policy initiatives ultimately chart an alternative vision of how African Americans might exert their influence (either independently or through the United States) throughout the hemisphere. If the experiences of settler-colonialism and a tyrannical metropole allowed Euro-descended US-Americans in the eighteenth century to conceive bold new formulations of republicanism and liberalism that their descendants believed themselves *destined* to disseminate (willingly or otherwise) throughout the hemisphere, then Black critiques of those ideals constituted a similarly ambitious political imagination. In their place, as we have seen, the "Africanization" of democracy, political organizing, and foreign policy envision more equitable modes of Americanness, rooted in empathic experiences of disenfranchisement and displacement.

Coda

From Manifest Destiny to MAGA

Throughout *The Race for America*, I have argued that Black intellectuals' disidentification with Manifest Destiny challenged its underlying principles and putatively preordained geopolitical outcomes. By doing so, they envisioned novel (re)configurations of citizenship, race, borders, and transnational solidarity during a crucial period in which the United States evolved into an imperial power. By narrating their engagement with this core concept of US-American nationalism (including the fraught internalizations of its exceptionalist and expansionist ethos), I have outlined a Black counterhistory of "the hemisphere" as an idea and documented Black methods for rethinking the region and its possibilities. In other words, the texts discussed in this book theorize how political forms and literary forms are not discrete but rather mutually constitutive and even coextensive. In Daniel Peterson's *The Looking-Glass*, the generic conventions of autobiography and travel narrative, as well as the material form of the gift book, enable his self-fashioning as a US-American citizen, even as his sponsors in the NYCS argued that the only republican citizenship available to African Americans was in West Africa. For James McCune Smith, not only did Washington Irving's folkloric tales of Communipaw inspire his authorial persona in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, but these romantic histories of multiracial democracy shaped his empirical challenges to racialist science and his proposed "colored republic" in Nicaragua. In the Black borderlands of Canada West, both Henry Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd used their migratory experiences and newspaper platforms to theorize more expansive gender roles than those US-American slavery afforded to Black men and women, whether free or enslaved. And for Martin Delany and the constituents of the 1872 Cuban Anti-Slavery Convention, the literariness of convention culture transformed the anti-Black fearmongering around the Africanization of Cuba into a praxis of diaspora that built networks of anticolonial trans-American politics around Blackness rather than the United States' avaricious expansionism and transnational white supremacy. Thus, what *The Race for America* has documented is how Black intellectuals effectively undermined Manifest Destiny through invocation and disidentification, challenging its exclusionary ideologies and revising (though

not always rejecting) its imperial ambitions through creative reappropriations of its core tenets.

By extension, this conclusion makes a case for sustained attention to the so-called American Renaissance: an era in which the elemental scripts of US-American "Greatness" metastasized to the national consciousness and our literature, and an era that continues to be romanticized through both the nostalgic invocations of MAGA and the teaching of US-American literature.[1] I reflect briefly on how the Black counterhistory of *The Race for America* also lays bare how Manifest Destiny's georacial logics have mutated over generations into the white nostalgia and US-American exceptionalism (Greatness) emblematized and aggravated by Donald Trump. What I hope to suggest, ultimately, is how the Black critiques, prospectuses, and organizing models discussed throughout this book might provide tools for contesting the jingoism and white identity politics that a brazen demagogue has amplified, entrenched, and normalized.

Canon Building and Empire Building

The populist purchase of "Make America Great Again" lies in the vagaries of its final word. "Again" is not lazy but rather purposely hazy, summoning a sense of tradition that is unaccountable to historical specificity. Instead, the unshakable *feeling* of US-American Greatness and anxieties over its corruption become affective truths not accountable to fact-checking or historical accuracy. While "Again" is most commonly understood to reference post–World War II economic growth or the aggressive market deregulation and hollowing of the welfare state in the 1980s, it also recalls the primordial script of US-American Greatness: Manifest Destiny.[2] Similarly drawing on nostalgia (reveries of an atavistic "Anglo-Saxon" past) and fantasies of national preeminence, Manifest Destiny lays track for MAGA. Correspondingly, this national mythology also provides a cipher for MAGA's open embrace of modern white nationalism. Manifest Destiny argues that the United States' white hegemony is the fount of its Greatness, and consequently, any challenge to that white hegemony (demographic changes, cultural shifts, realignments of political power) becomes an existential threat—not only to the nation-state but also to Civilization itself (since Manifest Destiny situates "Anglo-Saxons" in the so-called New World as Civilization's stewards). Manifest Destiny, in other words, exposes how MAGA's seemingly race-neutral appeals to "traditional values" and US-American Greatness depend on an orthodox mythology that was also defined by white nationalism and

xenophobic nativism. While noting MAGA's open embrace of racist ideologies is hardly a new insight, I do want to emphasize here that these ideologies are endemic to the genealogy of self-aggrandizing national mythology that, in many ways, begins with Manifest Destiny—MAGA is not extraordinary, but rather the most recent iteration. Highlighting this through line is paramount because twenty-first-century exponents of these views have developed savvy strategies of circumlocution that attire these disreputable arguments in the venerable vestments of intellectualism and "free speech," thereby surreptitiously introducing a shockingly wide audience to white nationalism, incrementally eroding conservative media consumers' resistance to more overtly racist ideas like the great replacement theory.[3] Unlike the antebellum arguments averring "Anglo-Saxon" supremacy, for example, modern white nationalism connivingly sidesteps questions of racial/cultural superiority. Instead, it professes that "national identity [in the United States] should be built around white ethnicity, and that white people should therefore maintain both a demographic majority and dominance of the nation's culture and public life."[4] Although this distinction seems semantic because both white supremacy and white nationalism shared the desired outcome of Herrenvolk democracy, the latter is especially insidious because it putatively disavows the former: it denies that white people are superior but insists that the United States has always been and therefore should continue to be a white-majority and white-governed nation dedicated to the advancement of white interests. By ostensibly renouncing the vulgar bigotry of white supremacy, white nationalism savvily weaponizes impoverished US-American understandings of racism as the actions of hateful individuals. As the United States becomes increasingly multicultural and multiracial, then, white nationalism authorizes white people "without racist bones in their bodies" to support policies designed to implement racist outcomes—such as preserving white minoritarian rule through antidemocratic reforms or resegregating schools through voucher programs—all while understanding their actions as exigencies of cultural self-defense rather than racism. To name Manifest Destiny as a proto-white nationalist discourse, then, is to identify the age of Manifest Destiny as the primal scene where US-Americanness (including its essential "Greatness") and whiteness (including its essential "supremacy") become coextensive, and where white nationalism and US-American nationalism become difficult to parse.

Furthermore, adopting this long view of Manifest Destiny lays bare how intertwined the antebellum Young America movement's literary and geopolitical projects were during an era that often defines the US-American literary

canon. At once increasingly commonplace and increasingly slippery in the mid-nineteenth century, "Young America" names both an informal salon of New York literary nationalists who endeavored to cultivate a distinctly US-American tradition of belles lettres and an ascendant faction of the Democratic Party that promoted "foreign expansion, prodemocracy intervention in other countries, research innovation, and economic growth."[5] This political enterprise propelled James K. Polk—whose nickname (Young Hickory) anointed him the heir-apparent to the party of Andrew Jackson (Old Hickory)—to the presidency in 1844, where in four short years his administration aggressively advanced Manifest Destiny's mission by annexing Texas, invading Mexico, and purchasing the Oregon Territory. As a "general label for the times," then, Young America captured the United States' ambitious adolescence and aggrandizement, including territorial expansion, economic growth, and an emergent sense of idiosyncratic cultural institutions.[6] During the *Democratic Review*'s two-decade run (1837–59) as the movement's unofficial organ, its editor, John L. O'Sullivan, selected contributors "not only for their writing ability, but for their general empathy with his aggressive worldview and disdain for the past," including his belief that "it is the right of our [Anglo-Saxon] manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us."[7] The *Review* understood that "the spirit of Literature and the spirit of Democracy are one" and therefore hired contributing writers who collectively forged a national literature reflective of the United States' distinctive character.[8] While publishing in the *Review* hardly signaled their endorsement of Young America's political goals (many disavowed them), O'Sullivan's roster of white writers nevertheless shared his investments in distinguishing US-American literature and demonstrating US-American Greatness. Tellingly, the *Review*'s table of contents resembles the *Norton Anthology*'s, including William Cullen Bryant, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Russell Lowell, Edgar Allan Poe, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and John Greenleaf Whittier. Their canonization indexes the success of Young America's literary nationalist project of (re)creating a unique aesthetic tradition: "It may not seem precisely accurate to refer to our mid-nineteenth century as a *rebirth*," pioneering US-American literary historian F. O. Matthiessen writes, "but that was how the writers themselves judged it. Not as a re-birth of values that had existed previously in America, but as America's way of producing a renaissance, by coming to its first maturity and affirming its rightful heritage in the whole

expanse of art and culture."[9] Monikers like "Young America" and the "American Renaissance" cannot help but characterize these deliberately nationalist writings as millennialist undertakings, thereby marrying US-American literature's "first maturity" and the realization of its "rightful heritage" to the political ambitions of Manifest Destiny. Indeed, the emergence of US-American belles lettres adduced how the geographic terrain of the so-called New World enabled "Anglo-Saxons" to perfect Civilization, signaling both process and product: literature perpetuated the mythology of a providential mission while also signifying the successes of its ongoing actualization by documenting novel achievements in literature (insofar as the arts represent cultural advancement).

In the eighty years since Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941), our understanding of this era's contributors and contents has grown dramatically, yielding a more diverse and representative canon.[10] Inclusion, however, remains fraught. As Barbara Christian warns, uncritical inclusivity incentivizes assimilation into an existing power structure not the dismantling of it: "Rather than wanting to change the whole model, many of us just want to be at the center."[11] Instead of diversifying or recentering the antebellum literary canon, *The Race for America* divulges a toolbox full of tactics for disidentifying with its animating mythologies that ultimately chart a path toward reconstructing them. I say "reconstruct" here not in David Reynolds's sense of *reconstructive criticism* as a methodology for digging "beneath" the American Renaissance but rather in W. E. B. DuBois's sense of *Black Reconstruction* (1935), which recognizes both the monumental revising of democracy that Black US-Americans undertook following the Civil War and the historiographical erasure of that labor through the *propaganda of history*.[12] Part and parcel of the self-conscious "rebirth" and "renewal" of US-American literature in the age of Manifest Destiny, as I have argued throughout this book, is an interwoven tradition of Black literary and political experimentation in "the possibilities of democracy," including uniquely US-American aesthetics and self-reflexive meditations on what, precisely, constitutes and complicates the nation.[13] The inextricability of Black interlocution with Manifest Destiny is "the real plot of the story," which more fantastic white renderings and more antagonistically inclusive renderings of the era "omit" and "half suppress."[14]

By highlighting the intimacy between the literary and imperial projects of Manifest Destiny as a precursor to dynamics unfolding in the MAGA era, I marshal Toni Morrison's axiom that "canon building is empire building." Uttered in an essay that turns on a reading of *Moby-Dick* (1851) and repeated

invocations of Young America, this often-quoted line merits contextualization in the literary tradition that Manifest Destiny ideologically underwrites and inaugurates. It exposes how expanding a white nationalist empire is only possible through the narcissistic self-righteousness of canonizing white literature as *the* national literature. Young America, she argues, catalyzed "a radical shift" in US-American literary productions and studies that entailed "heralding the authenticity of American literature itself" at precisely "the moment in America when whiteness became ideology"—a moment, as the moniker "American Renaissance" suggests, in which the United States was reborn as the nation it was always supposed to be.[15] The marriage of US-American exceptionalism and "Anglo-Saxonism" to literary discourses of "canon" and "masterpieces" that Morrison identifies is critical to understanding how and why Manifest Destiny's rhetoric has been so willfully weaponized by white supremacists in recent decades. For example, the New Century Foundation (whose name self-consciously invokes Manifest Destiny's millennialism) calls its official periodical *American Renaissance*, and the astroturfed conservative student organization launched by William F. Buckley Jr. still operates under the sigil of Young America.[16]

Moreover, explaining how these discourses mutually inform one another and tracking their evolution into modern politics offers a compelling explanation for why the humanities have become such an acute target for the culture wars that the modern conservative media and political apparatuses are waging—and staging. In a moment when the study of nineteenth-century US-American literature has begun to reflect more accurately both the period's multiculturalism and the increasingly diverse students we teach, an expanded curriculum of US-American literature and history can trouble the uncritical jingoistic nostalgia for bygone eras, while also historicizing the ugly obstinance of our belief in the United States' Greatness. It should be no surprise, then, that history and literature classrooms have become the battleground where MAGA is waging today's culture wars because they offer the kind of cultural context that would undermine the aforementioned ahistoricism that "Again" intentionally sidesteps.

Over the past few decades, conservative media has worked overtime to frame the proliferation of feminist, antiracist, and otherwise inclusive pedagogies as disciplinary apparatuses for liberal indoctrination and regulatory regimes of political correctness—claims that bespeak a deeper white nationalist anxiety that classrooms and syllabi are not as white as they were or "should" be. Morrison's second axiom ("canon defense is national defense") demystifies this self-righteous white backlash and the resulting moral panic

exemplified by the recent onslaught of Floridian legislation targeting critical race theory (CRT) and diversity, equity, and inclusion programs (DEI) in higher education.[17] In one of her final essays, in fact, Morrison explicitly named Trumpism as a white nationalist rebuke of multiculturalism. To "Make America Great Again," she recognized, meant to "Make America White Again," and this imperative mantra therefore authorizes brazen tactics of disenfranchisement and state repression "to limit the possibility of this untenable change, and restore white to its former status as a marker of national identity."[18] Encoded within MAGA's ostensibly color-blind patriotism, reverence for tradition, and economic anxiety are transactions of white power: "Again" reconciles the feverish jingoism of US-American exceptionalism with the white grievance politics that suggest that our Greatness has been *tainted* (a word whose racial valences I deliberately invoke here) and needs to be restored—through cruel immigration policies, antidemocratic reforms, eroding public education, and, if necessary, (extra)legal violence.[19]

The primacy of classrooms as a locus for white backlash against multicultural inclusion appears most plainly in the Trump administration's 1776 Commission. The fatuous *1776 Report* (2021) aims to rebut Nikole Hannah-Jones's revolutionary *1619 Project*, an ongoing and collective enterprise in which historians and journalists are collaborating to "reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative."[20] An antiacademic overture of state-sponsored propaganda, the report advances an exceptionalist narrative of national origins steeped in the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny: the founders "sought to build America as a shining 'city on a hill'—an exemplary nation . . . to be admired and emulated by nations of the world that wish to steer their government toward greater liberty and justice."[21] While this self-congratulatory romance of US-American history is transparently ideological and factually specious (there were no historians on the commission), what concerns us here is not the clumsiness of its attempted refutation but rather the vehemence and depth of white nationalist anxieties that its blustering betrays. The intentions of the *1619 Project* are nothing more than to complement and revise our interpretation of undisputed historical events, and yet its provocations were met with the White House weaponizing the federal government to propose a nationalized history curriculum that uncritically celebrates the United States' unimpeachable Greatness—a curriculum that may well have been imposed had Trump won reelection in 2020 and will likely provide a blueprint for the Republican heir-apparent, Ron DeSantis, who has already previewed his fascist overhaul of public higher

education in Florida with his takeover of the New College and a looming legislative docket of draconian educational reform bills ahead of his impending 2024 presidential bid.[22]

Significantly, though, the *1776 Report* not only seeks to downplay the scale of slavery and its enduring legacies but also portrays a Black counterhistory like the *1619 Project* as an existential threat to US-American values and traditions. It is no accident, for instance, that the former narrates the "intellectual origins of identity politics" as beginning with European Marxists like Antonio Gramsci, who, in the commission's words, argued that "revolutionaries should focus on countering the 'Hegemonic Narrative' of the established culture with a 'Counter-Narrative,' creating a counterculture that subverts and seeks to destroy the established culture." This misreading of Gramsci underwrites the further claim that "the Black Power and black nationalist movements reimagined America as a white supremacist regime," dismissing Black protest movements as Marxist anathema to "the established culture."[23] While it is unnecessary to refute these strategic oversimplifications of robust Black intellectual histories, this rhetorical sleight of hand is nevertheless illustrative of how white backlash works. First, it frames Black critiques of the United States' failures to actualize its avowed ideals as a recent phenomenon rather than a rich tradition extending back to writers like Phillis Wheatley Peters, Benjamin Banneker, and David Walker—all of whom challenged the Founding Fathers (sometimes directly) on their well-documented hypocrisies. By suggesting that such critiques only emerged during the "Black Power and black nationalist movements" of the 1960s and 1970s, the report not only erases two centuries of Black intellectual history but also attributes these critiques to "radical" Black organizations that white culture continues to view as "militant" and antithetical to the civil rights movement (which the report predictably caricatures with decontextualized, misinterpreted excerpts of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech). Second, these reductive misrepresentations expose the ideological function of the report's straw-manning of Gramsci (an avatar for Marxism and therefore modern conservative fearmongering around socialism). Hegemony—Gramsci's coinage for the process by which the bourgeoisie's interests and ideas are naturalized, normalized, and adopted among the proletariat against their own material interests—is whitewashed here as "the established culture," thereby overlooking the operations of power by which one culture *establishes* itself as dominant and fabricates its status as a monoculture. That is, the report mystifies how hegemony actually works, including how the commission's own ideological rendering of US-American

history serves as propaganda for interpellation into nationalist ideology. By extension, this deliberate misreading of Gramsci positions Black counter-histories as self-serving efforts to "subvert" and "destroy the established culture," deliberately echoing white dread of slave rebellions or modern white conservative panic over the fictitious "great replacement." And to be clear, Black challenges to whitewashed, self-aggrandizing narratives of US-American history *are* an existential threat—not to the United States, as the modern conservative movement that has openly embraced white nationalism would suggest, but to the entrenched mytho-histories that serve as that movement's enabling fictions.

"This Is Not a Story to Pass On"

It is tragic poetry that, as I complete this manuscript, Morrison has posthumously taken centerstage in the GOP's most recent moral panic over CRT. Like the deliberately nebulous "Again" of MAGA, the conservative media's culture war deliberately wields CRT as an empty vessel into which white audiences unfamiliar with its technical valences and academic rigor can pour their racial anxieties.[24] This carefully planned and wildly successful campaign has proliferated parent protests and state legislation—all designed to regulate classroom discussions of racism and hamstring any noncelebratory version of US-American history. In Virginia's 2021 gubernatorial election, for example, Republican Glenn Youngkin won on promises to ban CRT in public schools (which he fulfilled with his first executive order) and to empower white conservative parents to micromanage school curricula—a playbook adopted nationwide and leading to state policies that pressure public primary and secondary schools into removing books from library shelves (and teachers' personal shelves) based on complaints from even a single individual, who need not even be a parent of children at that school.[25] In the Virginia election, the latter issue emerged from a campaign ad featuring a white mother whose child was traumatized by reading Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) in his AP English class in 2013.[26] The irony of using such a reaction to turn away from this history is palpable: "If a senior in an Advanced Placement English class finds the content of a book like *Beloved* so 'disgusting and gross' that it caused him to have night terrors," Dana Williams observes, "imagine how much more difficult the lived experience must have been." Indeed, the stated purpose of literary and historical study is asking us to grapple with precisely these discomforts; but "not everyone is interested in that kind of lesson or enlightenment," Williams adds, "not when it means shifting our view of the

world from innocent to complicit."[27] I would highlight an additional irony here. What the fabricated debate over *Beloved* signals is a conflation—deliberate or otherwise—of literature (the novel) and theory (specifically CRT). On the one hand, this moral panic reveals an inherent fear of literature's capacity to spur white empathy for those immiserated by the enrichment and glorification of the United States, facilitate conversations about slavery's long afterlife, and render the nation's past with nuanced ambivalence. On the other hand, this conflation unwittingly echoes Barbara Christian's arguments in "The Race for Theory" (1987) by granting Black feminist literature like *Beloved* the status of theory, implicitly recognizing its power to think through the complexities of power, trauma, and healing on the scale of both individuals and the Black Atlantic. Put differently, in targeting literature as a dangerous vehicle for challenging the white nationalist propaganda of US-American history, this moral panic unintentionally affirms many of CRT's *actual* insights, including the importance of (counter)storytelling.

To conclude, then, I situate the theorizing embedded in Morrison's stirring refrain at *Beloved*'s conclusion ("this is not a story to pass on") as a guiding principle for the work ahead. In the novel, the phrase operates as a changing same, evolving from the declarative "it was not a story to pass on" into the imperative "this is not a story to pass on."[28] Without pretensions to offering a fresh interpretation of the text, I read this progression as both temporal (from explaining why characters gradually "disremember" Beloved to instructing readers how to [dis]remember the story themselves) and moral (the trauma of slavery is necessarily bequeathed and inherited, but the underlying ideologies that enabled it must not be). In tension with these readings, however, is the gloss of "pass on" as "overlook," as in "this is not a story to ignore"—a caution against the risks of refusing to engage with this troubling history. For our purposes, I read these lines as instructive for literary studies' approaches to Manifest Destiny and the American Renaissance. These paradigms are not stories to pass on (replicate), but they are also not stories to pass on (disregard). As the writers I have discussed throughout *The Race for America* consistently demonstrate, the preeminence of these discourses affords opportunities for disidentifications and counterhistories—enterprises that appreciate and confront their violence, while also probing the limits and possibilities of how these mytho-histories might be reformulated, how the foundations of transnational solidarity might be reconceptualized, and how arrangements of power might be reimagined. My hope is that by divulging the centrality of Black organizing practices, theories of diaspora, and experiences of dispossession to this work, we can renarrate the

histories of Manifest Destiny and the American Renaissance in which these hegemonic ideologies are held in suspense alongside alternative theories posed by Black intellectuals, both past and present. In this pluralistic and subjunctive view of the nineteenth century, we can analyze how systems of power took root and shaped the hemisphere while also learning from those who actively reimagined these processes and envisioned the world otherwise.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Following the lead of Marlene Daut, I risk "annoying my readers by using double quotation marks throughout this work to exhibit my skepticism" about the term "Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxonism" (*Tropics of Haiti*, 45). As several pioneering scholars in medieval and premodern literary studies have shown, not only is this not the term early English people used to describe themselves, but its popularity emerged as part of a racialist rewriting of English history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has since been co-opted by subsequent generations of white supremacists, including both the modern Far Right and Anglo-Saxon studies itself. See Rambaran-Olm, "Misnaming the Medieval"; Rambaran-Olm and Wade, "Many Myths." Marina Bilbija offers a similar critique of global Anglophone studies in "What's in a Name?"

2. These tensions were not uncommon since "the cacophony produced through U.S. colonialism and imperialism domestically and abroad often coerces struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants into complicity with settler colonialism" (J. A. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, xvii).

3. Stuckey, *Ideological Origins*, 1n1.

4. B. R. Byrd, "'We Are Negroes!,'" 15; Alexander, *Fear*, 7. See also West, Martin, and Wilkins, *From Toussaint to Tupac*.

5. On emigrationism as a marginal movement, see Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 197–222; F. J. Miller, *Search for a Black Nationality*, 134–69; Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 61–127.

6. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*.

7. For Ralph Bauer, this missed connection owes to how "the comparative hemispheric (North-South) approach has often stood in opposition to the transatlantic (East-West) or 'diasporic' models more familiar in recent African American critical discourse," yielding a "methodological tension" between these approaches ("Hemispheric Studies," 238). The result, Ifeoma Nwankwo observes, is a persistent "dearth of critical scholarship on relations between US African Americans and the rest of the Americas" ("Promises and Perils," 581). Recent literary studies like Judith Madera's *Black Atlas* and Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals* have begun to address this dearth. Moreover, this lacuna is less pronounced in Black internationalist historiography, including recent works like Ronald Angelo Johnson and Ousmane Power-Greene's *In Search of Liberty* (2021) and Elena Abbott's *Beacons of Liberty* (2021). Even among historians, though, the tendency is to frame Black engagement with expansionism, empire, and foreign policy in this era with "critical attention on white racist actions, a focus that can have the unintended effect of turning Black Americans into passive victims" rather than exploring how "Black people sought to negotiate the possibilities

and dangers created by the changing and sometimes fluid national boundaries drawn by different imperial powers in North America" (Sidbury, prologue, x).

8. Nwankwo, "Promises and Perils," 581.

9. Throughout this study, I capitalize "Civilization" when referencing the white supremacist intellectual project designed to delegitimize Black, Brown, and Indigenous cultures and knowledge production and to advance "the ongoing half-millennium of hemispheric conquest" that it seeks to justify (Rodríguez, *White Reconstruction*, 1).

10. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 5.

11. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 14.

12. C. J. Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 72–73. Although the influence of Euro-American political philosophy on Black nationalism in the United States is undeniable, Sterling Stuckey helpfully highlights the greater and underemphasized Africanist influence on the movement. Instead of the more provincial tribalism of European thought (including "Anglo-Saxon" mythology), "African traditions of group hegemony" infused Black nationalism in the United States with a tendency "to think of the oneness of African peoples and to perceive practically the whole of the African continent as a single entity" (*Ideological Origins*, 1–2n1).

13. Rael, *Black Identity*, 211.

14. In response to critical theory's ascendancy in literary studies during the 1980s, Barbara Christian decried a deepening trend toward self-adulatory, self-referential, and deliberately esoteric theories that were becoming radically divorced from the particulars of literature while ironically boasting their universal application as literary methods. Elevating Black women's literature as an undervalued locus of critical theorizing that academia was not equipped to recognize as such, she develops the notion of the *race for theory*, a phrase whose brilliance pivots on a pun: "we *are* a race for theory, but also that there *is* a race for theory" (Christian, "Does Theory Play Well in the Classroom?," 56). Although our current moment in literary studies, the context of my own critical intervention, and my authorial subject position relative to the literature I analyze all mark significant differences from the academic milieu that produced Christian's 1987 essay, I nevertheless believe it important to name her work's influence on my thinking here; see Foreman, "Riff."

15. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 4, 27.

16. Levine, *Martin Delany*.

17. Foreman, "Black Organizing," 29.

18. Building on the foundations of Black print cultural studies, which have productively recalibrated what constitutes "literature" (e.g., newspapers, speeches, pamphlets, and convention proceedings), I regard these public expressions as narrative forms. For overviews of this field, see F. S. Foster, "Narrative" and "Genealogies"; Cohen and Stein, *Early African American Print Culture*; Foreman, "Riff."

19. On aesthetics and trans-Americanism, see Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations*; Streeby, *American Sensations*; O'Brien, *Race, Romance, and Rebellion*; Windell, *Transamerican Sentimentalism*.

20. Gruesser, *Empire Abroad and the Empire at Home*; Murphy, *Shadowing the White Man's Burden*; Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*. See also Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, 195–216; Streeby, *Radical Sensations*, 175–250. Notably, scholarship

on Black internationalism overwhelmingly focuses on the twentieth century, with many considering the first Pan-African Congress (1900) and the expansion of these meetings in the interwar period as the beginning of the movement. See Blain, "Bibliography of Black Internationalism"; Blain, "Bibliography of Black Internationalism, Part II."

21. Moses, *Golden Age*, 17.

22. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 17. While the neologism "manifest destiny" is usually attributed to the *Democratic Review*'s founder and editor, John O'Sullivan, Linda Hudson suggests that this article and its era-defining coinage may have actually been authored by Jane Cazneau (*Mistress of Manifest Destiny*).

23. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 2.

24. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 84, 18.

25. Wynter, "Columbus," 151.

26. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 5.

27. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 15, 27, 7.

28. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 24.

29. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 43.

30. See A. Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire*; Rifkin, *Manifesting America*; Powell, *Ruthless Democracy*.

31. Painter, *History of White People*, 201–11; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 204; Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness*. On "Anglo-Saxonism" as white nationalism, see Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 130–64.

32. Merk, *Manifest Destiny*, 25, 31, 33. See also Van Engen, *City on a Hill*.

33. Moreton-Robinson, *White Possessive*, xii.

34. On whiteness as an ideological construct, see Allen, *Invention*; Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment*; I. H. López, *White by Law*; Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; Saxton, *Rise and Fall;* Rodríguez, *White Reconstruction*.

35. Mitchell, *From Slave Cabins to the White House*, 2, 3. Thomas Hietala, for instance, historicizes the annexation of Texas (1845) and expansionism more broadly as part of national strategies to remove Black populations from the metropole (*Manifest Design*, 10–54).

36. Santamarina, "Are We There Yet?," 308.

37. *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention*, 39.

38. "Call for a National Emigration Convention of Colored Men," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 19 August 1853.

39. Kazanjian, *Colonizing Trick*, 93–94.

40. Douglass, Watkins, and Whitfield, *Arguments, Pro and Con*, 9.

41. Holly, *Vindication*, 45.

42. Moses, *Golden Age*, 20, 16.

43. My thinking here is indebted to Donald Pease's theorization of US-American exceptionalism as a "state of fantasy": "American exceptionalism defined America as having already achieved the condition of the ideal nation that normally incited national desire . . . [and] thereafter motivated U.S. citizens to displace their normal national desire—to achieve an ideal nation—with the abnormal desire to propagate the U.S. model of nationalism" (*New American Exceptionalism*, 20, 22).

44. Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*, 19.

45. Douglass, Watkins, and Whitfield, *Arguments, Pro and Con*, 8.

46. Kelley, "'Local Phase,'" 1049.

47. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 11, 18, 19.

48. Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* famously argues that "American Negro history is basically a history of the conflict between integrationist and nationalist forces in politics, economics, and culture" and locates the origins of this debate in the opposition between Frederick Douglass and emigrationists "who are now barely remembered" (564, 5). Notably, Kwando Kinshasa's *Assimilation vs. Emigration* extends Cruse's arguments to antebellum Black newspapers, contending that the Black press helped the intellectual class marginalize emigrationism in favor of "stay and fight" ideologies.

49. The insufficiency of this binary becomes especially glaring in analysis of the Douglass–Delany dyad. As Sterling Stuckey observes, these terms are not only "inadequate as means of understanding the individuals being labeled but prevent us from understanding major ideologies and movements" by perpetuating the fiction that "the ideologies and programs of [Delany and Douglass] did not overlap" (*Ideological Origins*, 26–27). Wilson Moses later extends this critique, asserting that "there was no clear-cut distinction between black nationalism and assimilation" (*Golden Age*, 45), since nationalists often relied on white benefactors to accomplish their goals and assimilationists widely promoted exclusively Black institutions. For an extended discussion of this false binary, see Levine, *Martin Delany*.

50. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 168–69, 31.

51. See Levine, *Dislocating*; Ernest, *Nation within a Nation*; Wilson, *Specters of Democracy*; Knadler, *Remapping Citizenship*; Spires, *Practice of Citizenship*; Mitchell, *From Slave Cabins*; Bonner, *Remaking the Republic*; Foreman, Casey, and Patterson, *Colored Conventions Movement*.

52. Bolton, "Epic of Greater America"; O'Gorman, *Invention of America*; Hanke, *Do the Americas Have a Common History?*; Whitaker, *Western Hemisphere Idea*; Pérez-Firmat, *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?*; Wynter, "1492."

53. Radway, "What's in a Name?"; A. Kaplan, "Violent Belongings"; Fishkin, "Crossroads of Culture"; Elliott, "Diversity"; Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture*; Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations*; Lazo, *Writing to Cuba*; Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*; Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism*; Rosenthal, *Race Mixture*. For overviews of US-American hemispheric studies, see Bauer, "Hemispheric Studies"; Levander and Levine, *Hemispheric American Studies*. Importantly, though, as Marissa López notes, the tendency to treat *this* genealogy as *the* genealogy risks "an intellectual solipsism that mirrors U.S. geopolitical dominance" and "irk[s] Latin Americanists and others who had been engaged in inter-American scholarship for many years, with its pretensions to novelty and its focus on the United States in a hemispheric context" (*Chicano Nations*, 11).

54. Giles, "Commentary," 654; D. D. Nelson, "From Manitoba to Patagonia," 389.

55. Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations*, 27; Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture*, 5.

56. Gould, "Where Is American Literature?," 1225.

57. Notably, José David Saldívar's influential *Border Matters* "bring[s] cultural studies into dialogue with the complex black British diaspora culture orbits theorized by Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Kobena Mercer, among others," but this dialogue was largely contained to method rather than subject (19).

58. A. Kaplan, "Left Alone with America."

59. Spillers, "Who Cuts the Border?," 334–35.

60. The receptions and framings of several monumental recent works in Black studies illustrate this point. See Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*; J. M. Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*; Berry and Harris, *Sexuality and Slavery*.

61. Madera, *Black Atlas*, 111–12.

62. Davies, *Black Women*, 16–17.

63. McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xv.

64. Davies, *Black Women*, 22, 17. Advancing Paul Giles's conclusion that hemispheric studies has substituted a naturalized geography (i.e., the Americas as a hemisphere) with "a jagged conceptual space where the map of homeland security is traversed by unfamiliar cartographies" ("Commentary," 654), Vera Kutzinski argues that "what creates the conceptual space's jaggedness is *movement*" precisely because "people move in time across geographies and rarely in orderly and predictable fashion" (*Worlds of Langston Hughes*, 233).

65. Brodber, *Continent of Black Consciousness*, 102–3.

66. *OED Online*, s.v. "continent (*n.*)," June 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/40232. On continents as ideological constructs rather than "natural" geographic entities, see Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*.

67. Lazo, "Invention of America Again," 753.

68. For example, Nwankwo argues that the Haitian Revolution "forced people of African descent throughout the Americas, particularly those in the public and published eye, to name a relationship to the Haitian Revolution, in particular, and to a transnational idea of Black community, in general," yielding "new visions of the interrelatedness of people of African descent in disparate locations as well as of their place in the world" (*Black Cosmopolitanism*, 7–8). In many other studies, however, the Haitian Revolution has tended to function as a synecdoche for Black hemispheric thinking. The result, as Marlene Daut shows, is an overdetermination of Haiti in ways that problematically affirm reductive racialist narratives of the revolution and exacerbate the exceptionalist framing of Haiti as a uniquely radical uprising with uniquely disastrous results that have produced a uniquely tragic present (*Tropics of Haiti*). For transnational and hemispheric approaches to the Haitian Revolution, see Dubois, *Avengers*; Geggus, *Impact*; Garraway, *Tree of Liberty*; Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*; Jackson and Bacon, *African Americans*; Dillon and Drexler, *Haitian Revolution*; J. S. Scott, *Common Wind*; B. R. Byrd, *Black Republic*; Alexander, *Fear of a Black Republic*.

69. For Black writing about the postbellum annexation of Haiti and Santo Domingo see Polyné, "Expansion Now!"; Levine, *Dislocating*, 179–236; B. R. Byrd, *Black Republic*, 13–58.

70. Even as he argues that interest in Haiti continued between the 1820s and 1860, Chris Dixon nevertheless portrays it as marginal to mainstream emigrationism (*African America*, 87–127).

71. Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 107, 98.

72. Alexander, *Fear*, 6, 191.

73. Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy."

74. Levine, *Dislocating*, 11. In addition to the works cited below, see Sugden, *Emergent Worlds*.

75. Coronado, *World Not to Come*, 18; Lowe, *Intimacies*, 40.

76. Levine, *Dislocating*, 11–12.

77. Schoolman, *Abolitionist Geographies*, 15.

78. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 40–41.

79. See Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts." On "the problem of the archive" in early Black literary history, see McHenry, *Forgotten Readers*; Pratt, "Historical Totality"; Gikandi, "Rethinking"; D. A. Thomas, "Caribbean Studies"; Philip, *Zong!*

80. *Blake* appeared partially in the *Anglo-African Magazine* in 1859 before appearing fully serialized in the *Weekly Anglo-African* (1861–62), and both publications maintained niche, predominantly Black readerships. The novel was so obscure that Francis Rollin's 1883 biography of Delany does not even mention it. Rollin also reports that Delany interrupted the printing of his *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852) "in the midst of the first edition of one thousand" because it was "published without proper revision" (*Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany*, 80–81).

81. *Proceedings* was sold affordably "at *ten cents* a copy—except in the distant state of California, and equally distant territories—where to justify the expense of conveyance, the price is fixed at *twenty-five cents*" (*Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 3). In addition to publishing George B. Vashon's review of *Proceedings* ("The Late Cleveland Convention," 17 November 1854), *Frederick Douglass' Paper* noticed that it sold well in California ("A Voice from San Francisco," 16 February 1855).

82. *Report of the Select Committee*, 32.

83. *Report of the Select Committee*.

84. For accounts of this episode, see Vorenberg, "Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Black Colonization"; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 355–84. On Lincoln and colonization, see Franklin, *Emancipation Proclamation*; Magness and Page, *Colonization after Emancipation*; May, *Slavery, Race, and Conquest in the Tropics*, 230–76. Despite the Black activists' less than enthusiastic reaction to Lincoln's pitch—the only time Lincoln consulted African Americans about their proposed colonization—his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation (22 September 1862, more than a month after the disastrous meeting with Black leaders) announced the federal government's "effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this continent, or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the Governments existing there" (www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals_iv/sections/transcript_preliminary_emancipation.html).

Chapter One

1. Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism*, 21; Ciment, *Another America*, 107.

2. Mills, *World Colonization Made*, 7.

3. Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans*, 25.

4. Claude Clegg argues that Liberia was imagined as a "commercial conduit" from which Black settler-colonists could gradually penetrate the African continent and open trade between the interior and the United States (*Price of Liberty*, 33). Similarly, Brandon Mills illustrates the resonances between African colonization and Native American removal, as both projects "emphasized the importance of building politically and territorially separate nation-states not on lands that were destined to be incorporated into the United States" while nevertheless remaining "embedded within U.S. settler expansion" (*World Colonization Made*, 69). See also Zuck, *Divided Sovereignties*, 69–102. Relatedly, Benjamin and Anita Dennis's *Slaves to Racism* blends social psychology and personal narrative to historicize Americo-Liberians' role in exploiting West Africa over several generations, while both Bill McAdoo's *Pre–Civil War Black Nationalism* and Tunde Adeleke's *UnAfrican Americans* critique the complicity of nineteenth-century Black nationalists in facilitating the so-called Scramble for Africa decades later.

5. A. Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire*, 28.

6. Diemer, *Politics of Black Citizenship*, 12.

7. Hale, *Northwood*, 408. See also Hale, *Liberia*.

8. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 9.

9. Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans*, 119.

10. Kazanjian, *Colonizing Trick*, 96.

11. Kazanjian, *Brink of Freedom*, 6.

12. In referring to "institutional colonization," I suggest a symmetry between the print cultural infrastructure of the abolitionist movement that Teresa Goddu (*Selling Antislavery*) and Trish Loughran (*Republic in Print*, 303–440) outline and that of colonization. Both relied on state auxiliaries to a national body, robust exchange among their own pamphleteering and newspaper networks, and fundraising through traveling agents. Mary Tyler-McGraw also compares colonizationist organizing tactics to those of religious and benevolent societies (*African Republic*, 3).

13. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 12.

14. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 96.

15. On Black anticolonizationist discourses, see Lee, "Emigrationist Turn"; Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*. Just over 10,000 people emigrated to Liberia from 1820 to 1860 (Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 251). For comparison, Benjamin Hunt estimated that the number of emigrants to Haiti and their descendants exceeded 13,000 (Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti*, 11), and the first voyage to Haiti in the 1820s carried more passengers from the United States than the ACS would send to Liberia that entire decade (Fanning, *Caribbean Crossings*, 125n2). For a comparative reading of these two movements, see Abbott, *Beacons of Liberty*, 21–49; Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 61–86.

16. C. Foster, "Colonization of the Free Negroes."

17. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 97–98; Mills, *World Colonization Made*, 132. For the NYCS, "receipts nearly doubled and the number of emigrants sent to Liberia increased more than ten-fold" during this period (Eli Seifman, "A History of the New-York State Colonization Society," ScMG347, box 31, folder 3, p. 115, New York Colonization Society Records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Archives and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library).

18. Clegg, *Price of Liberty*, 173–74. The tonal and rhetorical shift was so dramatic that Martha Schoolman differentiates this revitalized midcentury movement from "colonization," terming this new iteration "*postcolonizationist* Liberian emigrationism" (*Abolitionist Geographies*, 158). Conversely, my own framing of this transition as a colonizationist renaissance underscores the rhetorical continuity, demographic scale, and imperialist dimensions of the movement that "emigrationism" tends to neutralize.

19. "Independence of Liberia," *African Repository*, December 1847, 383, 384.

20. Perhaps to avoid endorsing Stowe's ending (which earned stout opprobrium from abolitionists and Black activists) or perhaps because Stowe quickly disavowed colonization following the controversy, colonizationists remained relatively mum regarding *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. At the 1853 meeting of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Leonard Bacon read "a note" from Stowe proclaiming she "had no sympathy with the coercive policy of the Colonization Society," adding that she had intended to include a chapter explicitly repudiating any colonizationist sympathies and still "had it in contemplation to publish such matter separately" (*Thirteenth Annual Report*, 193). Shockingly, although Charles B. Ray noted that the novel "had been used at the anniversary of the New-York Colonization Society" (*Thirteenth Annual Report*, 192), the *African Repository* published no reviews or commentary on the novel, and the ACS's reports from its 1852 and 1853 conventions are similarly silent. Colonizationists' caution notwithstanding, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* nevertheless profoundly influenced the movement's regeneration (Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 97–129).

21. On this pessimism, see Schoolman, *Abolitionist Geographies*, 125–60.

22. This maneuver preemptively countered Black westward migrations, as seen in Rev. James Mitchell's 1853 broadside in Springfield, Illinois, soliciting donations and emigrants for the ACS from "the friends of colonization." Ikuko Asaka identifies similar dynamics in white-led schemes for colonizing free Black people in Central America (*Tropical Freedom*, 167–91). Such efforts were deemed urgent because Black nationalists like Henry Highland Garnet had begun considering the newly seized western territories for consolidating the free Black population and forming a separate Black state or even nation ("The West—the West!" *North Star*, 26 January 1849).

23. Everett, *Address*, 7.

24. Everett, *Address*, 1, 3.

25. On the mortality rates of early English colonists and a sophisticated discussion of both the rhetorics and experiences of atrocity that governed settler colonization, see Donegan, *Seasons of Misery*. She identifies George Percy's *A Trewe Relacyon* (c. 1625) as the source of the eighty-five percent mortality rate figure (90). While Everett plays down the mortality figures in Liberia, they are staggering. Although 4,751 ACS-sponsored emigrants settled in Liberia during its first twenty-three years, the 1843 census reported a population of just 2,388 (Shick, *Behold the Promised Land*, 27, 50). On mortality in Liberia, see Clegg, *Price of Liberty*, 227–37.

26. Ciment, *Another America*, 12.

27. Kazanjian, *Colonizing Trick*, 100.

28. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*.

29. On environmental determinism in the context of colonization, see Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 139–66.

30. Everett, *Address*, 7–8.

31. Although the so-called Scramble for Africa is associated with the late nineteenth century, US-American coverage of European explorations of Central Africa bespeaks an emergent awareness of an intensifying colonial competition for land, resources, and power in Africa. This was especially true among colonizationists. The *Colonization Herald* discussed the Prussian explorers Heinrich Barth and Adolf Overweg, ominously noting that the English were funding similar missions ("Central African Exploration," March 1852). Two years later, they opined that "if anything can open up the vast interior of Central Africa to European commerce, it will be the magnificent river discovered by Dr. Barth" ("Efforts to Open Central Africa," *Colonization Herald*, March 1854). Similarly, the *New-York Colonization Journal* detailed the voyages of both Dr. Livingstone and Francis Galton, who had begun publishing parts of *Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa* (1853) in the *London Record* ("Discoveries of Dr. Livingstone and Francis Galter [*sic*]" and "Progress of Discovery," April 1852). It also advertised the proposed voyage of US-American naval officer Lieutenant M. C. Watkins, which promised to open Central Africa to Liberia and the United States ("Exploration of the Interior of Africa," September 1851).

32. As early as Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), we see colonization proposed as a means of gradually abolishing slavery, replacing the deported Black labor force with white immigrants, and establishing a paternalistic protectorate over the African American colony in West Africa (Jordan, *White over Black*, 429–81; Kazanjian, *Colonizing Trick*, 96–124). Jefferson precociously anticipates what the marriage of Manifest Destiny and colonization would later make explicit: if the American hemisphere was providentially prescribed as an arena for "Anglo-Saxon" preeminence, then people of color would be necessarily proscribed from that same arena. Consequently, colonizationists continued citing Jefferson's arguments in the 1850s ("President Jefferson on Colonization," *New-York Colonization Journal*, June 1852; Everett, *Address*, 8).

33. Moses, *Golden Age*, 45.

34. Fagan, *Black Newspaper*, 5, 6.

35. Moses, *Golden Age*, 46, 41. Liberia openly embraced this framing: its constitution and declaration of independence are replete with references to God's influence on the formation and destiny of the nation. Moreover, the republic's first president, J. J. Roberts, proclaimed that "a doubt should no longer remain as to the designs of Heaven in returning us to our fatherland" to found "a Christian state . . . on the barbarous coast of benighted Africa." Americo-Liberians, he added, were God's "chosen instrument" for "restoring to Africa a government, a name, and the blessings of civilization and Christianity" ("Third Inaugural, December 3, 1851," in *The Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of Liberia*, 1980, 13).

36. The New York African Free School system was largely underwritten by colonizationists and therefore deeply influenced by its ideologies (Duane, *Educated for Freedom*, 4). Crummell's writings were well-circulated in colonizationist print culture, but he has been much maligned among scholars, who view his political philosophy as complicit in the imperialist exploitation of Africa (Moses, *Golden Age*, 59–82; Adeleke, *Un-African Americans*, 70–91).

37. "Laying the Corner Stone of a New Church Edifice," *African Repository*, April 1855, 121.

38. On Crummell's interpellation in nineteenth-century racialist thinking, see Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 3–27.

39. Crummell, *Duty*, 30.

40. Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans*, 121, 25. McAdoo makes a similar argument in *Pre–Civil War Black Nationalism*, asserting that "reactionary" antebellum Black nationalism resembled a kind of "Black Zionism" in which a Black bourgeoisie in the United States sought to exploit Africa for its own enrichment.

41. According to Bell I. Wiley, "Territorial expansion was largely responsible for the chronic conflict between natives and settlers that occurred in the years preceding the American Civil War. The tribesman regarded the newcomers with suspicion from the beginning, and apprehension was intensified as the immigrants increased in number, acquired more land, cut forests, killed the game, interfered with the slave trade, and sought to impose Christian religion upon them" (*Slaves No More*, 4).

42. "Emigrant Vessels for Liberia," *New-York Colonization Journal*, November 1853; "Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society," *Colonization Herald*, March 1854. The vessel might have carried more, but the NYCS executive committee learned in early October that "17 or perhaps 20 of the emigrants expected to go would fail & that only fifty in all could now be relied upon to go" (Minutes of the Executive Committee, 5 October 1853, ScMG347, box 2, folder 1, New York Colonization Society Records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Archives and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library). The 1850s marked a transitional period in which the demographics of emigrants shifted from predominantly free people to formerly enslaved people: "The sudden surge of free black emigration in 1850 and 1851, a response to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, which put every black on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line at risk of abduction and enslavement, was an aberration. By 1861, when the Civil War effectively put an end to emigration from the United States, manumitted slaves and their descendants outnumbered free blacks and their descendants by roughly three to two" (Ciment, *Another America*, 102).

43. "Emigrant Vessels for Liberia," *New-York Colonization Journal*, November 1853. The roster was also reprinted in the *African Repository* ("List of Emigrants," March 1854, 88–89).

44. "Emigrant Vessels for Liberia," *New-York Colonization Journal*, November 1853; "The New York Expedition for Liberia," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 25 November 1853.

45. "Emigrant Vessels for Liberia," *New-York Colonization Journal*, November 1853.

46. "The New York Expedition for Liberia," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 25 November 1853.

47. "The *Isla de Cuba*," *Colonization Herald*, November 1853.

48. "Later from Africa," *African Repository*, May 1854 (reprinted from *New York Spectator*); "*Barque Isla de Cuba*," *Virginian Colonizationist*, May 1854 (reprinted from *Journal of Commerce*).

49. These book-length publications and Augustus Washington's letters to the *African Repository* are collected in Moses, *Liberian Dreams*.

50. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 4.

51. Dayan, "Paul Gilroy's Slaves," 7.

52. The *Banshee* provides a case in point. Of the 277 passengers crammed aboard the ship—116 more than it had transported only seven months earlier—118 were "emancipated by the will of" their former enslavers, making their emigrations not agential acts but obligations shaped by legal preconditions and the posthumous power that their former enslavers continued to exert over them ("List of Emigrants," *African Repository*, January 1854, 19–24). On the deportation of people whose enslavers died testate, see Clegg, *Price of Liberty*, 189–96.

53. Clegg, *Price of Liberty*, 208. In mourning these losses, the *African Repository* admitted, "We could not expect that all would pass safely through the process of acclimation" and attributed the cause of these deaths to the emigrants' moral failings ("some of them have acted most imprudently in drinking and exposing themselves") and reckless disregard for their own health ("unfortunately, they frequently disregard the advise [*sic*] and directions of the physicians") ("From H. J. Roberts, M. D.," May 1854, 133; "Latest from Liberia," June 1854, 188–89).

54. Sharpe, *In the Wake*.

55. The ACS was aware of this irony, publishing coverage of its 1858 seizure and later reporting that the vessel trafficked enslaved Africans on at least three voyages under three different captains before its destruction ("An Intended Slaver," *African Repository*, December 1858, 378; "Slavers under the American Flag," *African Repository*, December 1860, 377). *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (www.slavevoyages.org) contradicts this information, claiming the vessel (Voyage ID: 4961) was "Captured by United States before slaves embarked." For more on this incident, see Harris, *Last Slave Ships*, 188–90.

56. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 77.

57. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 81.

58. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 90–91.

59. On critical fabulation as method, see Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts."

60. Kathleen Donegan's *Seasons of Misery* productively differentiates between "colonization as an imperial project and becoming colonial as a lived condition," where the settlers who experienced the latter "were charged with possessing and holding the land," often with catastrophic results (4). This delineation, importantly, is not a defense of colonialism but a grappling with how "the extreme suffering endured and violence perpetrated" by colonists in North America unsettle their self-imaging as "an advanced people existing in well-ordered, civilized groups" (4).

61. While a full exploration of this gap lies outside the purview of this project, Kazanjian's *Brink of Freedom* provides a superb model for future endeavors.

62. The NYCS escalated its outreach during this period by "furnishing a copy of both *The African Repository* and the *Liberian Advocate* (a colonization paper edited by the Reverend R.S. Finley of St. Louis) to every pastor of a church in New York State" (Seifman, "History of the New-York State Colonization Society," ScMG347, box 31, folder 3, p. 118, New York Colonization Society Records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Archives and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library).

63. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 23.

64. "A Colored Clergyman for Liberia," *African Repository*, March 1853, 84.

65. "For Liberia," *Colonization Herald*, March 1853.

66. Although the abbreviated article in the *Colonization Herald* does not cite the *Journal of Commerce*, its source is still clear from verbatim excerpts. "For Liberia" also appears in the *Cleveland Herald* (28 December 1852), citing the *Rochester Democrat* as its source.

67. I found no evidence of solicitation or an explicit quid pro quo in the NYCS executive committee's minutes, but prospective travelers were certainly aware of colonizationists' increasing reliance on first-person Black accounts of Liberia and the willingness to sponsor travelers amenable to authoring approbatory accounts. In fact, Peterson seems to have filled a void created by the death of Elias Jones, a Black traveler who drowned during his own sponsored journey to West Africa months earlier. "Had Jones lived to make the explorations which he intended," the *Journal of Commerce* lamented, "he would, no doubt, have brought back a very favorable report" ("A Colored Clergyman for Liberia," *African Repository*, March 1853, 84).

68. "Barque Isla de Cuba," *Virginian Colonizationist*, 1 May 1854.

69. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 61–62.

70. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past*, 156.

71. Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, xxvii; Scruggs, "Love of Liberty," 201.

72. Gunning, *Moving Home*, 11.

73. The bibliography on "respectability politics" is too robust to rehearse fully here, but tellingly, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham coins the term while analyzing church communities, echoing Peterson's application of the label to Christian Americo-Liberians in contradistinction to "heathen" Africans and his earlier critiques of the Bethel AME congregation (*Righteous Discontent*).

74. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 95–96.

75. On colorism and what he calls the "mulatto elite," see Ciment, *Another America*, 77–120. Dennis and Dennis similarly characterize midcentury Liberia as a "small, closed community of about twelve thousand," where "status was based on family ties and 'who you knew,'" resulting in society shaped by nepotism, colorism, and discrimination regarding birth status (free/enslaved) (*Slaves to Racism*, 13).

76. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 118.

77. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 49, 50.

78. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 123, 118, 110.

79. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 118–19.

80. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 97, 121.

81. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 103.

82. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 98. Although the Liberian Constitution codifies the republic's mission "to provide a home for the dispersed and oppressed children of Africa, and to regenerate and enlighten this benighted continent," and stipulates that "none but persons of Color shall be admitted to citizenship," the right to citizenship did not extend to colonized Africans within the nation's borders (*Independent Republic*, 7). As Tyler-McGraw writes, "Indigenous people were not considered to be citizens, in part because many groups were seen as 'nations' in their own right, separate entities living within and with-out the physical bounds of the republic and able to negotiate treaties. In theory, however, individual Gola or Vai, for example, who

converted to Christianity and adopted a Westernized life could become citizens" (*African Republic*, 165).

83. Shick, *Behold the Promised Land*, 64–65. Whether this system constituted a form of slavery prompted disagreement among Peterson's contemporaries from the *Isla de Cuba*. William Nesbit's appraisal of apprenticeships in Monrovia led him to conclude that "slavery still exists in Liberia," but he also interviewed an indigent Americo-Liberian to show that impoverished Black immigrants faced conditions approximating US-American slavery (*Four Months*, 37, 46–49). Martin Delany seconds these conclusions in his introduction to the volume. Samuel Williams, in his rejoinder to *Four Months in Liberia*, proclaims, "Nesbit lied in making this assertion." Though he describes apprenticeships in gentler terms, he confesses that "black people are no better than white people, as many, when they have power, abuse it, and so it is with some in Liberia; wicked persons there do abuse the native youths" (*Four Years*, 58–59).

84. Dennis and Dennis, *Slaves to Racism*, 13.

85. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 120–21.

86. Peterson's narrative strategically avoids any mention of conflicts between Africans and settlers. Ciment characterizes the era as relatively peaceful, with the rather large caveat of "a brief war in the mid-1850s between the Grebo and the colonists of Maryland" (*Another America*, 122), which Clegg argues was actually "part of a single, ongoing war over African lands and trade, not discreet, unrelated hostilities" that spanned Liberia's colonial period (*Price of Liberty*, 238). For more on Americo-Liberian conflicts with Africans during this period, see Shick, *Behold the Promised Land*, 91–101; Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 55–78.

87. "Later from Africa," *African Repository*, May 1854, 154. Peterson's letter also appeared in "From Africa," *Journal of Commerce*, 9 March 1854; "Later from Africa," *Washington Sentinel*, 11 March 1854; "Arrival of the *Isla de Cuba*," *Tri-Weekly Commercial*, 11 March 1854; "Later from Africa," *Buffalo Daily Republican*, 10 March 1854; "From Africa," *Weekly National Intelligencer*, 11 March 1854; "Later from Africa," *Charleston Daily Courier*, 12 March 1854.

88. "Meetings to Be Held," *New York Herald*, 8 May 1854; "Twenty-Second Annual Report of the New-York State Colonization Society," *New-York Colonization Journal*, May 1854.

89. While colonizationist publications rarely reviewed or advertised literature, the expectations surrounding Peterson's publication nevertheless make its absence surprising. Peterson apparently took personal responsibility for its distribution and sales as a result. The *Trenton State Gazette* had the book "handed to us by the author" and advertised its availability at two local bookstores ("The Looking-Glass," 26 June 1854). The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* also advertised it "for sale by Wilder and Babcock, 51 Fulton St," nearby the offices of Peterson's printer, J. P. Wright ("The Looking-Glass," 8 July 1854).

90. "Four Years in Liberia," *African Repository*, December 1857, 365–72.

91. "Rev. Geo. Thompson on Nesbit's Book," *African Repository*, July 1857, 198–99; "Four Months in Liberia," *New-York Colonization Journal*, September 1854; "Intelligence from Liberia," *African Repository*, May 1856, 135–38; "[Letter to] Rev. J. B. Pinney," *New-York Colonization Journal*, September 1854. Colonizationists' vehemence in rebut-

ting Nesbit matched his persistent efforts to delegitimize colonization upon his return. After publishing his pamphlet, he lectured on how conditions in Liberia horrified him ("Meeting of the Colored People," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 31 August 1855), circulated letters from Americo-Liberians who were desperate to return to the United States ("Discouraging Letter from Liberia," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 30 March 1855), and publicly debated a colonizationist ("Liberia," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 16 November 1865). Colonizationists' responses were so severe that they published a letter from former Liberian secretary of state D. B. Warner that described Nesbit as "unworthy of a place among free men" ("Latest from Liberia," *African Repository*, July 1856, 196), and they would continue to jab at him decades later ("Liberia; the Americo-African Republic," *African Repository*, October 1886, 120).

92. The cover image resembles Liberia's national seal: a dove carrying a letter above a ship in harbor, framed by unfurled scrolls reading "Republic of Liberia" and "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here." For analysis of the seal, see Kazanjian, *Brink of Freedom*, 35–41. *The Looking-Glass* appeared in at least three different cloth bindings. In addition to the pictured black binding from the American Antiquarian Society, UNC–Chapel Hill's copy of *The Looking-Glass* (digitized by Documenting the American South) has a reddish binding, and a copy I consulted at Vanderbilt University has a green binding.

93. While I have not found advertisements for *The Looking-Glass* indicating its price, abolitionist gift books provide a useful point of comparison. The Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society's gift book, *Autographs for Freedom* (1854), came in three different editions, and the edition most closely resembling *The Looking-Glass* (a duodecimo with "full gilt sides and edges") sold for two dollars per copy ("Autographs for Freedom," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 6 January 1854). This comparison also suggests that *The Looking-Glass* may have exceeded its literary and political functions to serve as an art object for display in middle-class parlors or as a thoughtful favor in middle-class courtship (Fritz and Fee, "To Give the Gift of Freedom"; Goddu, *Selling Antislavery*, 122–32).

94. Kazanjian, *Brink of Freedom*, 57–58, 48.

95. Baker, *Journey Back*, 43. On the conventions of white abolitionist authentication of slave narratives, see Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*; F. S. Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*; Stepto, *From Behind*; Sekora, "Black Message / White Envelope"; Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*. *The Looking-Glass* even innovates on the slave narrative's convention of printing paratextual authenticating documents to verify the character of the author. While Peterson does supply a lengthy list of white benefactors (134–37), he also includes a "Certificates" section (138–43) that prints testimonies from Black friends in both New York and Monrovia (including Liberian President J. J. Roberts).

96. Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, xxviii. Peterson was acutely aware of how anxiously his sponsors anticipated his report. Shortly after returning from Liberia in March 1854, the *African Repository* reprinted a letter he penned to J. Orcott, teasing a quick sketch of Africa before tantalizing readers with deliberate withholding: "I would say more now, but if it please the Lord I intend coming to the United States in the spring and publishing a book, so that all may know for themselves" ("Interesting from Liberia," April 1854, 124). Evidencing mounting interest in his report, the *African Repository* re-

printed the letter from the *Hartford Courant*, and the *Daily National Intelligencer* (15 March 1854) also reprinted the missive. For an important conversation on race, patronage, and authorship, see L. Jackson, *Business of Letters*, 53–88.

97. Documenting the American South catalogs *The Looking-Glass* in its "North American Slave Narratives" collection, implicitly arguing that this autobiographical narrative detailing the author's conversion to Christianity, his journey out of the South (Maryland), and his unambiguous condemnation of slavery effectively align this publication with the slave narrative genre, even though, as Erin Penrod notes, Peterson "was never actually enslaved" (Penrod, summary). No primary or secondary source I have encountered contradicts this claim, but the facts are nevertheless peculiar. Peterson writes that "my parents were slaves" (13), and he describes apprenticing to purchase his mother's freedom, so according to *partus sequitur ventrem* laws, he would have been enslaved also. I am not interested in whether Peterson misremembers or misrepresents autobiographical details, but I highlight these discrepancies to underscore *The Looking-Glass*'s generic resemblance to the slave narrative.

98. Ball, *To Live an Antislavery Life*, 59.

99. Gunning, *Moving Home*, 16.

100. Bonner, *Remaking the Republic*, 75, 84. Significantly, Bonner locates 1840s Philadelphia (where Peterson lived and worked for much of the decade) as a particularly dense location for these conversations.

101. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past*, 154.

102. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 32, 33.

103. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 32, 31, 62.

104. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 57. On the tesseract as a heuristic device, see King, *Black Shoals*, 175–206.

105. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 25, 26.

106. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 87.

107. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 95.

108. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 96.

109. "Liberia as It Is—III," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 December 1854. Tellingly, the ACS commissioned Washington to daguerreotype "one or two good views of Monrovia—say one taken from some good position near the mouth of the river—from which the little city presents a very beautiful appearance, and another from some other good position, which your own judgment could best determine" (J. W. Lugenbeel to Augustus Washington, 20 October 1853, box 2, folder 12, American Colonization Society Records, Library of Congress, Washington, DC). Their goal was to elicit a portrait of Monrovia as an African "city on the hill" (Scruggs, "Photographs").

110. Peterson's printer, J. P. Wright, occasionally included illustrations in the publications his office printed, but *The Looking-Glass* departs dramatically. Scruggs notes that several of these woodcuts "reiterate iconographic patterns found in contemporary printers' specimen books," but nevertheless they seem to be unique to this book ("'Love of Liberty,'" 201). While illustrations were more common by the 1850s, commissioning new woodcuts remained a luxury for authors, since "wood-engraving blocks were fragile, as well as time-consuming and expensive to produce," and the engravings themselves "were usually produced independently from the printed

sheets—even at a separate shop—and then inserted into the text during the binding process" (Winship, "Manufacturing and Book Production," 64–65). Peterson tells us that he "expended all the money contributed to pay the cost of his tour" (146), but these funds likely also supported these illustrations.

111. Cobb, *Picture Freedom*, 196. See also Capers, "Black Voices."

112. On the visual culture of antislavery, see Wood, *Blind Memory*; Chaney, *Fugitive Vision*; Clytus, "'Keep It before the People'"; Neary, *Fugitive Testimony*; Cutter, *Illustrated Slave*; Goddu, *Selling Antislavery*.

113. Cobb, *Picture Freedom*, 191.

114. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 13.

115. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 18.

116. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 13, 17.

117. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 18, 15, 21.

118. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 27, 20, 37, 62, 67.

119. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 50.

120. Cobb, *Picture Freedom*, 160. See Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 67.

121. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 67.

122. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 21.

123. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 49, 52, 57.

124. On colonization's situation of African Americans outside the civic and geographic nation, see Diemer, *Politics of Black Citizenship*, 11–46.

125. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 61.

126. Peterson, *Looking-Glass*, 138. The 1850 census lists Peterson as a fifty-five-year-old tailor with $1,600 in real estate assets, and a household composed of four daughters and a sister-in-law (1850 US census, Camden County, NJ, population schedule, South Ward, City of Camden, p. 87 [printed, 173 handwritten], dwelling 324, family 341, Daniel Peterson). When Peterson returned from Liberia, he resettled with his family in Camden (1855 New Jersey state census, Camden County, first district, population schedule, unpaginated, Daniel Peterson). Upon his passing, the county assigned his wife Mary as executor of her husband's estate (Camden County, NJ, Wills and Probate Records, 1739–1991, Letters of Administration, A-C, 1844–1884, 281). The *Christian Recorder* reports the death of his youngest daughter, Cascelia, adding that she was buried in a family plot in Camden, NJ, just after Christmas 1863 ("Died," 9 January 1864).

Chapter Two

1. "Call for a National Emigration Convention of Colored Men," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 19 August 1853.

2. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 7–9.

3. Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 6.

4. Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*, 19, 5.

5. See Levine, *Martin Delany*, 63, 90; Mattox, "Mayor of San Juan del Norte?"; Nwankwo, "Promises and Perils."

6. Rusert, *Fugitive Science*, 19. In her discussion of McCune Smith, Rusert focuses on the Black sextant sketch in his "Heads of the Colored People" series for *Frederick*

Douglass' Paper, arguing that the sextant's vernacular modes of empiricism, data collection, and analysis model a method of Black science and knowledge production explicitly developed outside the more formal laboratories, classrooms, and medical facilities. Although McCune Smith's review of *Nicaragua* adopts academic language and scientific protocols, its deployment of empirical methods to challenge received knowledge regarding racial ontology, demography, and geopolitics nevertheless reflects a similar ethos of fugitivity.

7. "Letter from Communipaw," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 18 March 1852.

8. McCune Smith, "Human Brotherhood," 90.

9. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 40–41.

10. O'Sullivan, "Annexation," 9.

11. Gobat, *Empire by Invitation*, 12. *The Destiny of Nicaragua* provides a chart of New York to California voyages and, notably, draws heavily on Squier's later work, *Notes on Central America*.

12. In 1854, Commodore Matthew C. Perry coerced Japan into signing a treaty at the Convention of Kanagawa, opening it to trade and commerce with the United States. On US-American efforts to establish a commercial empire in the Pacific as an outgrowth of expansionism, see Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*, 62–96.

13. Rollin, *Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany*, 78–79.

14. Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 79; Delany, "Destiny of the Colored People," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 23 July 1852.

15. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 56, 38. Delany's address provides extensive quantitative data on populations throughout the Americas to conclude, in a manner reminiscent of McCune Smith, that with "but one-seventh of this population, 3,495,714, . . . being white, or of pure European extraction, there is a population throughout this vast area of 20,974,286 . . . colored persons, who constitute, from the immense preponderance of their numbers, the *ruling element*, as they ever must be, of those countries" (*Proceedings*, 46). The importance of achieving a demographic advantage or majority is a consistent theme throughout Delany's writings (Crane, "Lexicon"). We can also see the convention's organizers experimenting with this strategy in the appendix to Douglass, Watkins, and Whitfield, *Arguments, Pro and Con*. On Black emigration to the British West Indies, see Kenny, "Manliness"; Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 139–66.

16. As part of its platform, the convention proclaimed "that the relative terms Negro, African, Black, Colored and Mulatto, when applied to us, shall ever be held with the same respect and pride; and synonimous [*sic*] with the terms, Caucasian, White, Anglo-Saxon and European, when applied to that class of people" (*Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 27).

17. "Call for a National Emigration Convention of Colored Men," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 28 July 1854.

18. Levine, *Martin Delany*, 63.

19. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 57–58. Nicaragua had been embroiled in civil wars since its decolonization in 1821. After several tumultuous years as part of the Federal Republic of Central America (a confederation of former Spanish colonies), it became an independent republic in 1838. Over the next decade, rivalries

between liberal factions in León and conservative factions in Grenada kept Nicaragua in flux, with political priorities shifting radically with each regime change. By the time of Squier's appointment (1849), the republican government—seated in the western cities of León and Grenada—had reluctantly ceded control of San Juan del Norte to the British, whom they believed were propping up a "barbaric" Miskitu puppet state to justify their own political and economic presence in the region. Driven by their own commercial interests and a racist reluctance to recognize Miskitu sovereignty, Nicaragua was eager to collaborate with the United States against the British (Wolfe, "'Cruel Whip'"). For more on how debates over slavery infected US-American foreign policy toward Latin America during this period, see May, *Slavery, Race, and Conquest*.

20. F. Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint*, 97–103.

21. Delany, *Condition*, 203. Similarly, the convention patronizingly portrays populations of color elsewhere in the Americas as awaiting Black immigrants from the United States "with open arms and yearning hearts, importuning us in the name of suffering humanity to come, to make common cause, and share one common fate on the continent" ("Call for a National Emigration Convention of Colored Men," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 28 July 1854).

22. Douglass, Watkins, and Whitfield, *Arguments, Pro and Con*, 9.

23. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 56.

24. Sollors and Diedrich, *Black Columbiad*. I would also situate Delany's counterhistory in relation to two other histories of early America that seek to write Black experiences and thought into foundational (trans)national narratives: C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* and Nathan Irvin Huggins's *Black Odyssey*.

25. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 51, 52.

26. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 39.

27. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 41.

28. Douglass, Watkins, and Whitfield, *Arguments, Pro and Con*, 9.

29. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 47.

30. My intent here is not to amplify efforts undermining Miskitu sovereignty and land rights; quite the opposite. By underscoring the fabrication of the Mosquito Kingdom, I stress that the Miskitu recognized themselves as part of no such entity prior to British intervention and that the fabrication of this political state superseded Indigenous governance. Although "Miskitu" is sometimes transliterated as "Miskito" or "Mosquito," I use the Indigenous spelling. On British interventionism, see Dozier, *Nicaragua's Mosquito Shore*.

31. Hooker, "Race and the Space of Citizenship," 251–52. According to both popular legend and most historical accounts, Miskitu "ethnogenesis" transpired during the seventeenth century after a slave ship wrecked off the Caribbean coast of present-day Nicaragua and Honduras, after which the surviving Africans intermarried with the Sumu and Tawira who resided there (Pineda, *Shipwrecked Identities*, 34–42). On Creole culture, see Goett, "Diasporic Identities."

32. Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 80.

33. Levine, *Martin Delany*, 62. Contemporary accounts corroborate a significant Black immigrant population in the region. Rev. Benjamin Smith, who helped build the first AME church in Greytown in 1852, recalled that those efforts produced a small

religious community "partly of English persons and partly of colored people" (Payne, *History*, 380–92). On Black immigrants in San Juan del Norte during the 1850s, see Lapp, *Gold Rush California*, 43–48. For the most complete account of Delany's election, see Mattox, "Mayor."

34. *OED Online*, s.v. "colonization (*n.*)," March 2022. www.oed.com/view/Entry/36538.

35. S. N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 5–6.

36. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 56–57.

37. S. N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 28. Tellingly, Delany's counterhistory rehearses the narrative that Africans' presence in the Americas resulted from Indigenous "extinction" ("the Indian and the African were enslaved together, when the Indian sunk, and the African stood" [*Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 47]), a claim Jackson identifies as central to constructions of creole indigeneity.

38. While Delany was "detained in the city of New York," he sought out McCune Smith's assistance with a patent after the attorney he consulted declined to advance his application because "the applicant must be a citizen of the United States" (Delany, *Condition*, preface; Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 78). Though no record exists of their discussions about *Nicaragua*, Delany's brief chapter on "Nicaragua and New Grenada" in *Condition* strongly intimates that he read Squier alongside McCune Smith. His references to geography, politics, and climate are all remarkably consistent with Squier's observations, especially his claim that "in these countries, colored men now fill the highest places in the country: and colored people have the same chances there, that white people have in the United States" (202–3). In fact, in the same issue of *Frederick Douglass' Paper* that McCune Smith's initial review appeared, William Wilson (as Ethiop) reflected on one of Delany's recent addresses and wondered incredulously, "Has he got the Colonization fever?" ("From Our Brooklyn Correspondent," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 8 January 1852).

39. As Terry Barnhart notes, Squier's approaches modeled "a more comprehensive and integrated science that examined humankind in all of its physical, psychological, material, historical, and linguistic characteristics as well as its corresponding social relations and institutions" (*Ephraim George Squier*, 2), leading many of his European contemporaries to regard him as "a legitimate heir to the legacy of Alexander von Humboldt" (Strom, "Labor, Race, and Colonization," 265). Notably, both *Nicaragua* (1852) and *Notes on Central America* (1855) were quickly translated into German, likely resulting from Humboldt's legacy.

40. Squier was likely inspired to pursue a diplomatic appointment as a means to research after ethnographer John Lloyd Stephens's tenure as chargé d'affaires to Central America (1839–40) allowed him to write his critically acclaimed *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (1841).

41. Though Squier negotiated a treaty with the Liberal government at Léon within two weeks, the US Senate ultimately refused to adopt it because Squier had overcommitted them to Nicaragua. The treaty secured the United States exclusive rights to canal construction and guarantees for right-of-way in exchange for recognizing Nicaraguan sovereignty, defending its contested borders with Costa Rica and Honduras, and affirming Nicaragua's claim to San Juan del Norte (which the British claimed was

part of its Mosquito Kingdom protectorate). Instead, the Senate adopted the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty in 1850, wherein both the United States and Great Britain forfeited exclusive claims to the proposed canal zone.

42. Francis Parkman to E. G. Squier, May 13, 1849, in Parkman, *Letters*, 22.

43. Gunn, *Ethnology and Empire*, 4.

44. Dain, *Hideous Monster*, 247. According to John Stauffer, it was through Jean-Baptiste Baillière's New York bookstore that "McCune Smith became a citizen of the world, purchasing new releases from Europe and America and reviewing for Douglass's newspaper those that he found worthy of review" (*James McCune Smith*, 103). McCune Smith likely purchased *Nicaragua* for himself there, though it is possible that his wife, Malvina, or perhaps even Delany gifted him a copy for Christmas, since "its elegant appearance is in good keeping with the season—and a better gift-book could hardly be sought" ("New Publications," *New York Evangelist*, 25 December 1851).

45. Dain, *Hideous Monster*, 247, 303n33.

46. Nott, *Two Lectures*, 38. On transatlantic scientific debates over "hybridity" leading up to the publication of *Nicaragua*, see Hume, "Quantifying Characters."

47. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 279, 273–74.

48. Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1:8.

49. Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1:8.

50. Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1:8.

51. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 84, 85, 86.

52. Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1:153–54. These claims cut sharply against widely accepted aesthetic and scientific views at the time, which collaborated to entrench European features as the standards that continue to contour ideas of beauty in European and American cultures and which deeply stigmatized any "taint" of non-European ancestry (Painter, *History*, 59–71). In fact, Squier's view that *mestizas*, *mulatas*, and *zambas* possessed the best elements of their multiracial ancestries was such a contravention against social norms that this perspective would later be attributed to abolitionists and Republicans in the parodic fearmongering pamphlet *Miscegenation* (1864), which coined that neologism. For more on this political hoax, see S. Kaplan, "Miscegenation"; Bloch, *Miscegenation*; Nyong'o, *Amalgamation Waltz*, 28–32; Sussman, "'Miscegenation' Troll."

53. Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1:268.

54. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 85.

55. Dana Nelson tracks a similar ideological reconciliation of white supremacy and theories of "hybridity" in the writings of Squier's mentor, Samuel Morton (*National Manhood*, 102–34).

56. Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 23.

57. Squier's ignorance of Africa was a personal shortcoming, but it also reflected a structural failure, since the Smithsonian's endorsement and his membership in the New York Ethnological Society encouraged rather than checked his "white mediocrity"—Koritha Mitchell's term for the lower expectations that white people, especially men, face in institutional spaces ("White Mediocrity"). Even though the US-American academy regarded Squier more legitimately than Nott and Gliddon, conflating this recognition with scientific rigor is problematic at best. Though praised for the immersive, systematic, and detail-oriented methods in his works on Indige-

nous mounds in the Mississippi Valley, Squier's fieldwork in Nicaragua "was neither as systematic nor as sustained as that earlier work conducted in Ohio and New York" (Barnhart, *Ephraim George Squier*, 160). The point was personal for McCune Smith, who was racially excluded from US-American medical schools (though he eventually graduated from the University of Glasgow) and the American Medical Association.

58. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 85, 86.

59. McCune Smith may be following many of his misinformed contemporaries in ascribing the ethnonym to all Africans who were trafficked from Senegambia, even though, as Hugh Thomas notes, "many who were called 'Wolof' in America would originally have come from the far interior, from places well beyond the head navigation of the Sénégal" (*Slave Trade*, 343). The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (www.slavevoyages.org) shows that the Wolofs and their descendants were present in both North and Central America. There were 358 ships that brought captive Africans from Senegambia to mainland North America between 1662 and 1817; there were 279 voyages that brought captive Africans from Senegambia to the Spanish circum-Caribbean (including Nicaragua) from 1545 to 1726. Tracking the actual numbers of Wolofs in North and Central America is quite challenging, however, as Gwendolyn Midlo Hall observes: "*The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* distorts this period because of misinformation about the meanings of geographic terms defined therein," resulting in "a serious undercount of Africans brought from Great Senegambia/Upper Guinea to Spanish America between 1595 and 1640" (*Slavery and African Ethnicities*, 85–86). Although the Spanish prohibited the trafficking of Wolofs, who developed a reputation for being dangerous to their enslavers, "they continued to be brought in in substantial numbers" (85). In fact, in colonial Louisiana from 1719 to 1820, enslavers especially desired Wolof women, who became known for their "high reproductive results" (142); as a result, the Wolof formed the fourth largest African ethnic group in that region (43). Notably, Mary Helms also indicates that the "African component on the [Mosquito] coast probably was largely West African," including many Wolof speakers ("Miskito Slaving," 190).

60. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 86.

61. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90.

62. Medical historian Thomas Morgan quips that "refuting racially biased statistics was his passion" ("Education and Medical Practice," 611). In fact, McCune Smith had already published a meticulous refutation of the 1840 US census, which dubiously claimed that "insanity" rates were higher among the free Black population than among their enslaved counterparts ("Freedom and Slavery for Afric-Americans," *Liberator*, 23 February 1844).

63. Squier's adoption of local racial terminology obscures his impoverished understandings of its nuances, and his reliance on outdated ethnographies results in his neglect of newer, more relevant ethnonyms like "Creole" (Olien, "Were the Miskito Indians Black?," 44–47).

64. Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1:267–68.

65. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 111.

66. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 84–85.

67. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 84.

68. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 84.

69. Though usually regarded as anti-emigrationist because of his later critiques of the African Civilization Society and Haitian emigration in letters to Henry Highland Garnet (Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 5:100–109), McCune Smith presents emigration as an individual decision: "If any of our young men feel enterprise kindling in their blood, Nicaragua, free Nicaragua, offers the highest inducements to fair and honest endeavor ("Nicaragua.—No. II," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 January 1852).

70. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 84.

71. C. L. Peterson, *Black Gotham*, 219–20.

72. Brickhouse, *Unsettlement of America*, 2. Irving, according to Jeffrey Insko, is similarly invested in the project of unsettlement, writing histories of colonial New York that "challenge this standard view of time as linear progression and the historicist contextualism that is its methodological counterpart" (*History*, 31).

73. McCune Smith, "Heads of the Colored People," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 25 March 1852.

74. McCune Smith, "Heads of the Colored People."

75. Spires, *Practice of Citizenship*, 153.

76. McCune Smith, "Dr. Smith's Journal," *Colored American*, 2 December 1837.

77. McCune Smith, "Civilization," *Anglo-African Magazine*, January 1859, 15.

78. McCune Smith, "Civilization," 13.

79. McCune Smith, "Nicaragua," 84.

80. McCune Smith, "Civilization," 13.

81. Black emigrationist J. Dennis Harris made this connection explicitly, though he unfortunately parrots British racism toward the Miskitu: "With this variety of 'physical circumstances,' also, the people [of Nicaragua] have always differed, in a direct and corresponding ratio. . . . In Central America, therefore, Dr. Smith's celebrated essay on 'Civilization—its Independence of Physical Circumstance,' receives a striking illustration, the damp Musquito coasts having propagated only a rude tribe of men; while San Salvador, for example, sustains a population highly civilized, and equal in number to New England" (*Summer*, 153).

82. Dain, *Hideous Monster*, 258, 259.

83. S. Hall, *Fateful Triangle*, 50.

84. McCune Smith, "Civilization," 15.

85. McCune Smith, "Civilization," 16.

86. McCune Smith, "Civilization," 5.

87. McCune Smith, "Letter from Communipaw," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 18 March 1852.

88. McCune Smith, "Destiny," 50.

89. Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism*, 53.

90. McCune Smith, "Destiny," 50.

91. McCune Smith, "Destiny," 49, 50, 57, 59.

92. McCune Smith anticipates the *New York Times*'s recent *1619 Project*, wherein Nikole Hannah-Jones argues that Black people have always been "the perfecters of democracy," dedicating their lives (and deaths) not only to exposing the United

States' foundational principles as both "an ideal and a lie" but also to closing that gap ("America Wasn't a Democracy," *New York Times*, 14 August 2019).

93. McCune Smith, "Civilization," 16–17.

94. Dobbs, *Reef Madness*, 154.

95. Dimock, *Through Other Continents*.

96. Elias, *Coral Empire*, 18, 17, 19. See also Elleray, "Little Builders."

97. Charles Lyell to Sir John F. W. Herschel, 24 May 1837, in Lyell, *Life Letters*, 12.

98. Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*, 19–20.

99. Elam, *Souls of Mixed Folk*, 9.

100. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*. Notably, McCune Smith's arguments dangerously coincided with the addition of "mulatto" as a racial category on the US census in 1850 as a demographic data point for racialists like Josiah Nott and James DeBow to test their theories about racial amalgamation (Williams, *Mark One*, 23).

101. Gordon, *Her Majesty's Other Children*, 67.

102. Ashe, "Theorizing the Post-Soul Aesthetic"; Elam, *Souls of Mixed Folk*; Dagbovie-Mullins, *Crossing B(l)ack*.

103. Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality."

104. In this way, McCune Smith's critiques of *Nicaragua* forestall the polemic arguments of Paul Gilroy's *Against Race*, wherein he details how race has consistently provided cover for the "unanimist fantasies" of fascist nationalisms, whose legacies have become inextricable from "race" itself. This claim prompts Gilroy's calls for abolishing race-thinking altogether and the articulation, in its place, of "cosmopolitan histories and transcultural experiences" that facilitate the imagination and realization of more inclusive, egalitarian forms of liberalism, which, like Lewis Gordon, he emphasizes must be "conceived explicitly as a response to the sufferings that raciology has wrought" (7, 18).

105. Walcott, *Black Like Who?*, 22.

106. "Call for a National Emigration Convention of Colored Men," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 28 July 1854. Shortly after the convention concluded, their national board sent James Theodore Holly to Haiti to broker a program of economic inducements for Black immigration similar to President Jean-Paul Boyer's policies in the 1820s. Although a military coup and regime change interrupted his negotiations, Holly joined forces with the white abolitionist James Redpath to promote Haitian emigration in the early 1860s (see *A Guide to Hayti* [1860]). He later led 110 migrants to Haiti under the auspices of the Episcopal Church, not the National Board of Emigration (Holly, *Facts*).

107. Despite arguing for the necessity of a national periodical in 1854 and publishing a prospectus for one at the next convention in 1856, it remains unclear whether Whitfield ever published the *Africo-American Repository*. Joan Sherman contends that "in July of 1858, the first issue was published in Buffalo," adding that Whitfield served as editor "for about a year" ("James Monroe Whitfield," 174). However, Robert Levine and Ivy Wilson note that apart from Sherman's citationless assertion, "there is no evidence that Whitfield managed to publish an issue" (Whitfield, *Works*, 193n70, 201).

108. *Speech of Hon. Frank P. Blair*. On Walker's coup in Central America, see May, *Southern Dream* and *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*; Gobat, *Empire by Invitation*; Dando-Collins, *Tycoon's War*; Harrison, *Agent of Empire*. The alliance with Blair was one of

convenience, as his proposals were "clearly a means of purging the United States of its black population" by burdening them with "the task of colonizing Central America, but [offering] no place within the current national borders" (Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 173).

109. Blair, *Destiny*, 34, 35, 38.

110. "The Central America Land Company," *Cleveland Morning Leader*, 2 June 1859.

111. When the promised time for their departure passed, Harris instead "humbly beseech[ed]" Blair to revive interest in emigration and "bring the subject again before Congress" (Blair, *Destiny*, 34). While Blair declined to do so (for the moment, at least), Harris's letter encouraged him to deliver an address promoting the colonization of African Americans from the United States to Honduras before the Boston Mercantile Association a month later. Two years after that, Blair presented a memorial to the House of Representatives signed by 240 Black residents of California, in which the signees petitioned Congress to finance their emigration (Dugged, Burkett, and Bailey, *Colonization of Free Blacks*). For more on the Blair family and Black emigration to Central America, see Foner, *Free Soil*, 261–300. The details of the Central American Land Company are murky, with historians disagreeing about its origins and even existence (Whitfield, *Works*, 11). While some claim the Blair family founded the company, Harris's letters—including mailing a notice about the company and a fifty-dollar share to philanthropist and colonizationist Benjamin Coates in July 1859 (Lapsansky-Werner and Bacon, *Back to Africa*, 130)—strongly suggest that he founded the company with other Black members of the Ohio State Anti-Slavery Society, as Floyd Miller argues (*Search for a Black Nationality*, 237–38). Both Joan Sherman ("James Monroe Whitfield," 175) and Lois Brown (*Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 250) claim that Whitfield traveled to Central America as part of the company's delegation. While Levine and Wilson admit that there is "no documentation of his possible travels," they also suggest that his relocation from Buffalo in 1859 to New Haven in 1860 (where his emigrationist colleague Holly lived) may have been prompted by that voyage. Indeed, Whitfield's eventual decision to relocate his family to California in the early 1860s would seem less drastic if he had already taken a steamer to Central America. However, on 18 April 1860, the other general agents of the Central American Land Company (Joseph Willson, Justin Holland, and F. W. Morris) published a notice in the *Cleveland Morning Leader* that their original announcement "was made prematurely." Because "circumstances at the time, or at any time since then [were] not favoring active measures for furthering the object of the association," they wrote, "no action was or has at any time been taken" and, moreover, that the company "has never had any active existence" ("Notice—To the Public"). The authors also distanced themselves from Harris, who had been lecturing and soliciting donations in St. Louis under the company's auspices without their consent or knowledge. Though Harris denied the charges when Holland confronted him, a 6 April 1860 letter in the *Weekly Anglo-African* corroborates that he had recently lectured in the nation's capital as "a commissioner [appointed] by a company of families in Cleveland, Ohio, to go to Central America to obtain homes from them" ("Our Washington Letter," 21 April 1860). Unrelatedly, as part of Lincoln's serious exploration of colonizing free African Americans to Central America, John Willis Menard—a Black clerk in the Department of the Interior—was dispatched to Honduras in 1863

to survey land (Magness and Page, *Colonization*, 43; Watson, "Caribbean Career of John Willis Menard").

112. Blackett, "Martin R. Delany and Robert Campbell," 6. Even though the convention endorsed and sponsored Delany's Niger Valley Exploring Party, the national board restricted its mission to "the purposes of science and for general information" and reiterated its stance as "entirely opposed to any Emigration there as such" (Delany, *Condition*, 245). While the 1858 amendments undoubtedly mark a formal dilution of its emigrationist ethos, the proscription of emigration to Africa is nevertheless wholly consistent with the 1854 platform, which announced the convention's opposition to "the American Colonization scheme of leaving the Western Hemisphere" and prohibited the admission of colonizationists promoting Africa ("Call for a National Emigration Convention of Colored Men," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 28 July 1854).

113. Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 7.

Chapter Three

1. Historical estimates of refugees from slavery arriving in Canada in the 1850s range wildly from 15,000 to 75,000, but according to Robin Winks, these reports are highly unreliable, and he puts the number closer to 30,000 (*Blacks in Canada*, 233–71). See also Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 31.

2. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera*, 25, 100.

3. Taylor, *Empire of Neglect*, 21, 23.

4. Abbott, *Beacons of Liberty*, 4.

5. C. L. Peterson, *Doers of the Word*, 112, 114.

6. Sadowski-Smith and Fox, "Theorizing the Hemisphere," 7.

7. Saldívar, *Border Matters*, 63.

8. Bebout, *Whiteness*, 3; Moriah, "Greater Compass," 23.

9. McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 96.

10. A. Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire*, 25.

11. "M. R. Delany," *Provincial Freeman*, 15 April 1854.

12. *OED Online*, s.v. "Rubicon (*n.*)," March 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/168363.

13. Ikuko Asaka notes that "until the middle of the 1840s, former-slave refugees faced a real danger of extradition" (*Tropical Freedom*, 13). After the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1843) affirmed that Canada had no obligation to surrender fugitives from slavery to the United States and after Canada passed an anti-extradition law (1849), no refugees from slavery were *legally* extradited, though it is likely that extralegal kidnappings transpired (Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 174). See also Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests*; Prince, "Illusion of Safety." On the Texas-Mexico borderlands and the issue of slavery/fugitivity, see Tyler, "Fugitive Slaves"; Cornell, "Citizens of Nowhere"; Audain, "Mexican Canaan"; Torget, *Seeds of Empire*; Baumgartner, *South to Freedom*; Hammack, "South of Slavery."

14. Adams, *Continental Divides*, 22. Ralph Bauer observes that the duality of borders as both constructed and concrete emerges from dialogues that hemispheric studies facilitates between (US-)American studies and Latin American studies ("Hemispheric Studies," 236). As Heike Paul argues, this duality was especially important to fugitives

from slavery "who considered it a safeguarding and life-saving barrier between a republic that included and tolerated slaveholders and a territory that had previously abolished slavery" ("Out of Chatham," 167–68).

15. W. W. Brown, *Narrative*, 109.

16. Ward, *Autobiography*, 133.

17. William Pease and Jane Pease contend that most refugees regarded the organized communities in Canada as "but way stations, training grounds for Negroes headed toward eventual assimilation into American society" (*Black Utopia*, 20). Winks estimates that after the Civil War, "perhaps two-thirds of those in the Canadas, more recently arrived and often with family ties in their former homes, moved in reverse down the Underground Railroad" (*Blacks in Canada*, 289).

18. Brand, *Map to the Door of No Return*, 19.

19. Brand, *Map to the Door of No Return*, 68.

20. On formulations of Black political thinking in this region that attend to the border as a concept, see Cooper, "Fluid Frontier"; Frost and Tuckers, *Fluid Frontier*; Adjetey, *Cross-Border Cosmopolitans*. Relatedly, Rachel Zellars refers to the region as a "bleeding border," which "attempt[s] to disentangle nuanced stories of black agency from the long arc of racial violence that determined location for black peoples migrating to and through Canada" ("Too Tedious to Mention," 70). For an excellent overview of transnational approaches to nineteenth-century Black Canada, see Sawallisch, "Fugitive Borders," 13–38. Beyond problematically romanticizing Canada as a safe harbor from slavery, an additional consequence of this framing is the further obfuscation of a historical Black presence in Canada prior to the mass exodus of Black refugees from the United States. Exacerbated by the sanitizing impulses of state-sponsored cultural nationalism and concerted efforts to distinguish Canada from the United States, Canadian studies tend to render Blackness an unthinkable dimension of Canadian history through what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls both formulas of erasure ("there were no Black people in Canada prior to waves of mid-nineteenth century immigration") and *formulas of banalization* ("the only Black people in Canadian history were refugees from the US-American slavery") (*Silencing the Past*, 96–97). These trends conceal a five-hundred-year Black presence in Canada (including but not limited to slavery), while simultaneously authorizing a narrative of Canadian nationalism that differentiates Canadian whiteness (benevolent and welcoming) from US-American whiteness (malicious and xenophobic). Together, these erasures and banalizations fabricate a history that authenticates Canadian white nationalism by perpetuating "the common view of Canada as a nation of white European settlers whose black citizens always come from elsewhere" and are therefore essentially "foreign" (Adams, *Continental Divides*, 64). Black Canadian scholars like George Elliott Clarke ("Must All Blackness Be American?") and Rinaldo Walcott ("Who Is She and What Is She to You?") have also noted that Paul Gilroy's circumscription of Black Canada from *The Black Atlantic* also owes to this silencing; see also Siemerling, *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*.

21. For earlier context on the Canada/Mexico debate among emigrationists, see Abbott, *Beacons of Liberty*, 77–99.

22. Shadd, *Plea*, 32, 54.

23. Shadd, *Plea*, 55.

24. As detailed in chapter 2, US-American efforts to colonize Central America were ultimately tempered by hesitance over military conflict with Great Britain. For more on British colonialism in this region, see Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 158–97.

25. Shadd, *Plea*, 56, 55. Benjamin Fagan argues that "the promise of black liberation emanated from that Empire" in Canada because of British commitments to antislavery and protection from US-American conquest that British subjectivity afforded (*Black Newspaper*, 111).

26. Shadd, *Plea*, 56, 60, 59.

27. David Kazanjian (*Brink of Freedom*) and Cara Kinnally (*Forgotten Futures*) contend that the Yucatán Caste War beginning in 1847 accelerated Mexican investment in transnational white supremacy and provided groundwork for the proslavery alliances that Shadd fears here.

28. Shadd, *Plea*, 59.

29. C. L. Peterson, *Doers*, 117.

30. Shadd, *Plea*, 60, 57.

31. Delany, *Condition*, 189–90.

32. *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention*, 38.

33. Delany, *Condition*, 190–91.

34. Delany, *Condition*, 191. Anti-Blackness in Canada West intensified in response to both the new Elgin refugee settlement (founded in 1849) and the influx of refugees after 1850. Asaka characterizes the 1850s as an "ongoing attempt to make the Canadian settler polity lily-white" as nascent Canadian nationalism began to coalesce around notions of whiteness (*Tropical Freedom*, 111). Contemporary accounts affirm this claim. Samuel Ringgold Ward shared Delany's concerns about white nationalism transcending the border: "In various parts of Canada Yankees have settled," he observes, and "some of them do not scruple to make known their desire to see Canada a part of the Union, and thus brought under the control of the slave power, and made a park for slaveholders to hunt human deer in" (*Autobiography*, 138). Though Ward attributes such sentiments to US-American agitation, he also claims that "Canadian Negro-haters are the very worst of their class," and "this feeling abounds most among the native Canadians" (143). Similarly, William Wells Brown reflected that "the more I see of Canada, the more I am convinced of a deep-rooted hatred of the Negro here" ("The Colored People of Canada," *Pine and Palm*, 30 November 1861), and Delany's omniscient narrator in *Blake* (which he wrote while living in Chatham) even comments on one character's excitement at finally reaching Canada: "Poor fellow! He little knew the unnatural feelings and course pursued toward his race by many Canadians" (*Blake*, 154). On the history of anti-Blackness in Canada, see Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*. For all the concern about the border's instability, however, it was only after the Civil War (1866) that the House of Representatives introduced an annexation bill, but it never left committee. See Warner, *Idea of Continental Union*; Little, "Short Life of a Protest Movement"; Bumsted, *Peoples of Canada*, 285; Simpson, *Under the North Star*.

35. Bibb, *Narrative*, 15–16. *Petit marronage* refers to "individual fugitive acts of truancy" in which the radius of flight from the plantation or the duration of the flight is relatively short—an important distinction from "the creation of communities of

freedom outside of the parameters of a plantation society (*grand marronage*) within which a majority of agents live" (Roberts, *Freedom*, 10). See also Nevius, *City of Refuge*.

36. Mignolo, *Local Histories*.

37. Heglar, introduction, xiii. Scholarship on these border crossings in *Narrative* has been largely ecocritical. See Outka, *Race and Nature*; Gerhardt, "Greening"; Finley, "Land of Liberty." Collectively, these readings provide a foundation for my reading of Bibb in their insistence on understandings of how even natural borders—like rivers—are shaped by the violence of slavery, colonialism, and expansionism.

38. Bibb, *Narrative*, 29.

39. Young, "All God's Children."

40. On panoramas in abolitionist print and visual culture, see Goddu, *Selling Antislavery*, 141–218.

41. Bibb, *Narrative*, 69.

42. This image originally appeared in the *American Anti-Slavery Almanac* (1840), an annual from which Bibb mined and adapted several woodcuts (Cutter, *Illustrated Slave*, 159–60). I'm grateful to Kristina Bowers, who brought this to my attention.

43. Bibb's concerns about the strictly symbolic nature of state borders were prescient. Within two years of his slave narrative's publication, Indiana—where he fled to from Kentucky—ratified a new constitution that decreed "No negro or mulatto shall come into or settle in the State" (Indiana Constitution of 1851, www.in.gov/history/2473.htm). Bibb's *Voice of the Fugitive* covered the new Indiana Constitution in its inaugural issue ("Western States and Slavery," 1 January 1851).

44. Bibb, *Narrative*, 150–51.

45. Bibb, *Narrative*, 153.

46. Bibb, *Narrative*, 158.

47. Donegan, *Seasons of Misery*, 4.

48. Henry Anthony, *Searching*, 29.

49. Heglar, introduction, xxxii.

50. Bibb, *Narrative*, 188.

51. Bibb, *Narrative*, 189.

52. Bibb, *Narrative*, 147–49.

53. Bibb, *Narrative*, 192.

54. Bibb, *Narrative*, 191.

55. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."

56. Bibb, *Narrative*, 189–90.

57. Bibb, *Narrative*, 191, 192. On Malinda's narrative containment within Bibb's autobiography, see Lewis, "Who'll Speak for Malinda?"

58. Green, "Am I Not a Husband and Father?"

59. Wallace, *Constructing*, 84.

60. Wallace, *Constructing*, 91.

61. Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 6.

62. In addition to combating gendered prescriptions of slavery, Bibb also anticipates the gender and family discourses that prevailed in Canada. As Asaka notes, "White colonists in Canada painted fugitive slaves as unwilling and incapable of racially en-

dogamous reproduction and familial relationships, which rendered them a threat to white settler colonial order" (*Tropical Freedom*, 8, 111–38).

63. Bibb, *Narrative*, 190–91.

64. Bibb, *Narrative*, 191.

65. Bibb, *Narrative*, 192.

66. Cooper, "Fluid Frontier," 131.

67. Similarly, in *Dawn of Detroit*, Tiya Miles unsettles the city's history as a hub of the Underground Railroad, arguing instead that it was fundamentally shaped by slavery and unfree Indigenous labor.

68. Walcott, "Who Is She and What Is She to You?," 38–39. On the newspaper as a transnational antislavery vehicle, see Cooper, "*The Voice of the Fugitive*." Its original twenty-five subscription agents (including Delany) sold the paper throughout Canada West, Pennsylvania, New York, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Michigan, and within months it hired agents in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Vermont; the paper also listed Henson, Garnet, and J. W. C. Pennington as agents during their respective lecture tours in England ("List of Agents," 15 January 1851; "List of Agents," 9 April 1851). Early issues included calls for other newspapers to trade copy, but Bibb was already reprinting from Canadian papers like the *Globe* (Toronto) and the *Amherstburg Courier*; antislavery papers like the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (New-Lisbon, OH), the *Liberator* (Boston), the *Pennsylvania Freeman* (Philadelphia), and the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (London); major penny presses from New York and Philadelphia; and niche papers like the Free Soil Party's *Essex County Freeman* (Salem, MA). Exchanges were so eclectic that early issues included a recurrent reminder that "all letters and exchange papers from the States, which are destined for us, must be directed to Detroit, Michigan; and those sent in Canada, to Sandwich" (*Voice of the Fugitive*, 15 January 1851).

69. J. T. H., "Interesting Letter from Vermont," *Voice of the Fugitive*, 7 May 1851. Although Holly would eventually espouse emigration to Central America and then Haiti (as seen in chapter 2), here he critiques "the distances of these locations from our enslaved brethren still clanking their chains" and the inhospitable climates of "their tropical latitudes" as obstacles to mobilizing African Americans to leave the United States. Canadian colonization, by contrast, was "divested of all these objections," because it was situated much closer geographically, politically, and socially to the United States.

70. Walcott, *Black Like Who?*, 47.

71. Tamarkin, *Anglophilia*, 179.

72. Taylor, *Empire of Neglect*, 229.

73. Dubinsky, Perry, and Yu, *Within and Without*, 6.

74. The "Constitution and By-Laws of the Refugee's Home Society," including its conditions for membership, appeared in *Voice of the Fugitive* on 9 September 1852. On the RHS, see Pease and Pease, *Black Utopia*, 109–22; Winks, 204–8.

75. At a convention in Sandwich just months after his arrival, Bibb, though not elected to a leadership position, called for the convention to form a society and "submitted a set of propositions as the basis for the Society," which were subsequently adopted. These proceedings were published in *Voice of the Fugitive*'s inaugural issue, thereby signaling the concomitant foundation of the paper and the society, with Bibb

central to each ("Fugitive Slaves in Canada West," *Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851). Bibb was also elected president of both the North American Convention in Toronto (1851) and the Windsor Anti-Slavery Society.

76. J. T. H., "Voice from the 'Green Mountains,'" *Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 June 1851.

77. Pelletier, *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism*, 35–58.

78. J. T. H., "Voice from the 'Green Mountains,'" *Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 June 1851; Gen. 9:1 (King James Version).

79. On the Bibbs-Shadd feud, see Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 34–84; Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 66–74.

80. Gardner, *Unexpected Places*, 57.

81. William Howard Day describes the *Aliened American* (Cleveland) as an addition to the "two newspapers conducted by Colored Americans, and those in New York State," likely referring to *Frederick Douglass' Paper* and the *Telegraph and Journal*, edited by Stephen Myers, Harriet Myers, and James W. Randolph in Albany ("The *Aliened American*," 9 April 1853). Bibb publicly bemoaned the founding of the *Provincial Freeman*, arguing, "As the *Voice* is not as extensively patronised as its merits demand, there is no necessity for another paper devoted to the interests of the colored people of Canada," but *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, in decrying Bibb's attacks on Shadd, observed just how poorly Bibb's paper circulated in Canada, where it was "scarcely known, among the colored people": "Only fifteen copies of it are taken in Toronto, and *one* copy in Hamilton; while, in the latter place, there is a population of 800 *colored people*" ("Voice of the Colored People of Sandwich, C.W.," 8 April 1853). Though Bibb's death in August 1854 ended his publication, Shadd's *Freeman* perennially struggled for readers, subscribers, and "the assistance from local abolitionists that she had expected to find" (Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 90). In fact, Shadd was actively thwarted by Canadian abolitionists, with whom she had an adversarial relationship. Shortly after fully launching the *Provincial Freeman*, for example, Shadd proposed "to get up a Fair or a Bazaar" like the one the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society hosted to support the *Liberator* or the one the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society hosted to support *Frederick Douglass' Paper* ("A Bazaar for the 'Provincial Freeman,'" 3 June 1854). She was distressed to learn that Julia Griffiths of the Rochester Society—apparently after reading Shadd's proposal—would be expanding her efforts to fundraise for Douglass by hosting a bazaar in Toronto under the aegis of the Toronto Anti-Slavery Society ("A Bazaar in Toronto for 'Frederick Douglass' Paper,' &c.," *Provincial Freeman*, 3 June 1854). Shadd did eventually host a bazaar for her paper in Chatham the following December.

82. Fagan, *Black Newspaper*, 102.

83. Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 43. The Bibbs leveraged personal connections in the AMA to underwrite the RHS. Because that settlement would include establishing a segregated school, Shadd rightly viewed this maneuver as cannibalizing future funding for her integrated school.

84. Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 48.

85. "Schools in Canada," *Voice of the Fugitive*, 15 July 1852.

86. Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 48.

87. For more on Mary Bibb (Miles), see Baumgartner, *In Pursuit of Knowledge*, 46–78; Cooper, "Black Women"; Tripp, "Mary Miles Bibb."

88. Cooper, "Black Women."

89. Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 115–16.

90. Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 113, 132.

91. This separatist logic, where "gender-specific norms associate Black men's political activism with *public* sphere actions outside the organization itself and Black women's activism with *private* sphere activities of women," as Patricia Hill Collins observes, pervades the long intellectual history of Black (inter)nationalism especially. This thinking within movements has "limit[ed] organizational efficacy in confronting social injustice," but has also worked to render the intellectual contributions of Black women invisible and to undervalue their "family and community" work as ancillary to the work of Black men in the social, political, and economic realms (*Black Feminist Thought*, 224). For discussions on the masculinist politics and history of Black nationalism, see Carby, *Race Men*; M. Stephens, *Black Empire*; R. Carr, *Black Nationalism in the New World*. For correctives to this double silencing of Black women's contributions to Black (inter)nationalism, see Glass, *Courting Communities*; Blain, *Set the World on Fire*; Blain, Gill, and West, *Turn the Whole World Over*.

92. Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 51.

93. On frontier mythology, see Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* and *Fatal Environment*; Nash, *Virgin Land*.

94. Santamarina, *Belabored Professions*, 18. Robinson's letter was somewhat of an aberration in Shadd's depictions of women's work in Canada. As Nassisse Solomon observes, although Shadd heavily emphasizes homesteading and clearing the land in *A Plea for Emigration*, she largely overlooks women's contributions to this physical labor and the new opportunities it created ("Calling to Her Brethren"). At the same time, however, the letter fits squarely into the pattern of "condemn[ing] the undervaluation of women's labor" that Nneka Dennie argues is essential to the *Provincial Freeman*'s project ("Leave That Slavery-Cursed Republic," 485).

95. Prescott, *Gender and Generation*, 14–37.

96. "To the Publisher of the Provincial Freeman," *Provincial Freeman*, 14 March 1857.

97. "Anti-Slavery Lectures," *Provincial Freeman*, 29 March 1856.

98. "American Slavery," *British Banner*, 20 November 1855. Though Shadd's rousing speech captivated delegates (who, despite previously subjecting the permissibility of her attendance to a contentious poll, subsequently voted to extend her speaking time beyond the allotted ten minutes), it was not recorded in the proceedings and exists now only in summative accounts (Moriah, "Greater Compass," 30–31).

99. "American Slavery," *British Banner*, 20 November 1855.

100. Patterson, "'Hermaphroditish Disturbers,'" 514–15.

101. "Pro-Slavery in Indiana," *Liberator*, 15 October 1858. See McDowell, *"The Changing Same,"* 161–62; Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 158–60; Mullen, "Indelicate Subjects," 1–7.

102. Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 74.

103. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 30; Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 57, 74.

104. Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 83, 95.

105. Emigrationism provided an especially hopeful platform for such reimagining. Unlike Shadd's controversial and contested admission at the National Convention in

1855, at least forty of the 141 delegates to the 1854 National Emigration Convention were women, and one of their first motions was to appoint Mary Bibb as permanent second vice president.

106. Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 59.

107. See Moriah, "Greater Compass," for a discussion of the role of performance in exposing the US-Canada borderlands as "sites at which Black identity could coalesce and where legacies of US racialization could begin to be dismantled" (33).

108. "Interesting Discussion on Emigration to Canada," *Provincial Freeman*, 22 December 1855.

109. Jabouin, "Writing (Black) Citizenship," 226, 222.

110. Mitchell, *From Slave Cabins*.

111. On Black women's educational advocacy, see Baumgartner, *In Pursuit of Knowledge*.

112. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 51, 64.

113. Ward, "A Recent Tour," *Provincial Freeman*, 24 March 1854.

114. On Black Canadian education, see Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 362–76; Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge"; Zellars, "Too Tedious to Mention." As Afua Cooper argues, there was a dramatic gap between law and practice regarding Black children's access to schooling in Canada ("Black Canada").

115. "Female Education," *Provincial Freeman*, 7 June 1856.

116. "Female Education," *Provincial Freeman*, 7 June 1856.

117. "Female Education," *Provincial Freeman*, 7 June 1856.

118. "Female Education," *Provincial Freeman*, 7 June 1856.

119. Chernock, *Right to Rule*, 116.

120. Pease and Pease, *Black Utopia*, 18.

121. "Letter from Canada," *Provincial Freeman*, 13 January 1855. Emphasis in original.

122. I am grateful to Kirsten Lee for bringing Europe's 1848 republican revolutions to my attention in this context.

123. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 44.

Chapter Four

1. "The Cuban Question—Extraordinary Rumors," *Daily National Intelligencer*, 22 October 1853.

2. The abolitionist press shows "Africanization" to be a discursive locus where anxieties about foreign policy were negotiated. Newspapers arguing that the British were interfering, like the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, quickly condemned the scheme on ethical grounds, reprinting an article forecasting the geopolitical nightmare of reopening the African slave trade under the guise of gradual emancipation ("The Africanization of Cuba," 17 November 1853). Other outlets identified the rhetoric as a cover for either US-American annexationists or European anti-annexationists. For more on how imperial contests shaped this discourse, see Urban, "Africanization"; P. S. Foner, *History of Cuba*, 75–85; May, *Southern Dream*, 46–76; Rauch, *American Interest*, 275–94; Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 19–144; Horne, *Race to Revolution*, 82–99.

3. *OED Online*, s.v. "Africanization (*n.*)," June 2021, www.oed.com/view/Entry/325443; *OED Online*, s.v. "Americanization (*n.*), June 2021, www.oed.com/view/Entry/6347.

4. "Africanization of Cuba," *National Era*, 8 December 1853. *Frederick Douglass' Paper* similarly contrasted the terms, arguing that "Americanization" would be "the most dire calamity which could befall" Cuba ("The Cuban Question," 23 June 1854).

5. See Alexander, *Fear*. On the impacts of the Haitian Revolution on Cuba, see Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*; on the fears of Cuba becoming "another Haiti," see Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 23–54.

6. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 281, 283. In the mid-1800s, Afro-descended people became the majority in Cuba, exacerbating uneasiness among affluent white *criollos* and enslavers (Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 159–240).

7. S. Hall, "Cultural Identity," 231.

8. S. Hall, "Cultural Identity," 235

9. S. Hall, "Cultural Identity," 227. DuBois's writings on Pan-Africanism further relieve the defining duality of diaspora by calling for "intellectual understanding and cooperation among all groups of Negro descent in order to bring about at the earliest possible time the industrial and spiritual emancipation of the Negro peoples" ("Pan-Africa," 242). Even as "Africa" unites diverse populations through their ancestry, their agenda is transnational Black liberation enacted through local actions and global cooperation, not a romantic return to Africa, recovery of history, or reconsolidation of disparate populations.

10. S. Hall, "Cultural Identity," 227.

11. Sundquist, *Wake the Nations*, 212, 213.

12. Spires, *Practice of Citizenship*, 80, 84.

13. See Horsman, *Race*; Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings*.

14. Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy," 41–42. On the deliberate challenges that Black Atlantic aesthetics present readers, see Brodber, "Head-Hurting Fiction"; Pinto, *Difficult Diasporas*.

15. Shreve, "Exodus of Martin Delany," 465.

16. Delany, *Blake*, 17. All citations of this text refer to McGann's 2017 edition unless otherwise noted.

17. Delany, *Blake*, 43.

18. Delany, *Blake*, 259.

19. Shreve, "Exodus."

20. Jaudon, "Obeah's Sensations," 718. While *religious novelty* might also be called "syncretism," I avoid this term, as critics highlight its tendency to reify constituent religions as "real" while downplaying the realness of "syncretic" religions.

21. Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation*, 132.

22. Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 3.

23. DuBois, "Pan-Africa," 247. For all the details of disease, topography, climate, and politics in his *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party* (1861), Delany's remarks on regional religions are spartan, overshadowed by arguments for renewed investments in missionary work as "essential to the success of civilization" in Africa (*Condition*, 342). However, his collaborator, Robert Campbell, writes extensively on

these matters in recounting the same journey; see Campbell, *Pilgrimage*. On Delany's assimilationist ideas for Black-led African colonization, see Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans*, 43–69; Moses, *Golden Age*, 32–55; Sterling, *Making*, 176–218; Tomek, *Colonization and Its Discontents*, 187–218.

24. Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 6. Erna Brodber's reflections on the flying man trope and her own writing have deeply influenced my thinking here. To explain her seemingly subconscious invocation of the trope despite her lack of familiarity, she concludes, "The tale of the flying man might have been brought from Africa but even if it didn't pre-exist, it would have to be made in Africa of the diaspora" because "it is natural for the imprisoned who see no hope of being released and who know that there is another kind of life, to think in terms of flight" ("Beyond a Boundary," 20, 19).

25. Delany, *Blake*, 18.

26. J. S. Scott, *Common Wind*.

27. Delany, *Blake*, 42.

28. Biggio, "Specter of Conspiracy"; Gerrity, "Freedom on the Move."

29. Chireau, "Conjure," 226–27.

30. On white fears of *marronage* in the United States and the Caribbean, see Weaver, *Medical Revolutionaries*; Paton "Obeah Acts" and *Cultural Politics of Obeah*; Iannini, *Fatal Revolutions*, 35–74; Savage, "Slave Poison/Slave Medicine"; Dillon, "Obi, Assemblage, Enchantment"; Wisecup, "Knowing Obeah"; Watson, "Mobile Obeah."

31. Nevius, *City of Refuge*.

32. Delany, *Blake*, 74, 113, 114.

33. Delany, *Blake*, 113.

34. Delany, *Blake*, 138.

35. Rusert, *Fugitive Science*, 149–80.

36. Delany, *Blake*, 91.

37. Delany, *Blake*, 115.

38. Delany, *Blake*, 111, 115, 116.

39. Delany, *Blake*, 114.

40. Powell, "Postcolonial Theory," 361–62; Doolen, "Be Cautious of the Word 'Rebel,'" 161.

41. Pierrot, *Black Avenger*, 158. Vincent Brown similarly argues that Tacky's Revolt in Jamaica inaugurated an ongoing slave rebellion that continued to unfold throughout the British Empire (*Tacky's Revolt*). See also Quarles, *American Revolution*; Horne, *Counter-Revolution of 1776*.

42. Delany, *Blake*, 138.

43. Martin, "Hoodoo Ladies," 122.

44. These uses of Conjure were especially important because "the acknowledged persistence of Africanisms in slave culture, of African cultural norms clashing with the antebellum black leadership's agenda," was a particularly thorny problem for suturing the class divide between Black intellectuals and enslaved people in Black organizing (Carr, *Black Nationalism*, 30).

45. Delany, *Blake*, 44.

46. Chireau, "Conjure," 228.

47. Delany, *Blake*, 137, 141, 143.

48. On the economics of "the white gap," see Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation*, 109–39.

49. Delany, *Blake*, 135, 136.

50. Delany, *Blake*, 115, 324n121.

51. Delany, *Blake*, 116.

52. Delany, *Blake*, 43.

53. Chireau, "Conjure," 226.

54. Delany, "Annexation of Cuba," *North Star*, 27 April 1849.

55. On *Blake* as a response to the annexation debate, see Clymer, "Transnational Politics"; Nwankwo, "Promises and Perils"; Leary, *Cultural History*, 23–43.

56. Delany, *Blake*, 299.

57. Delany, *Blake*, 301.

58. Delany, *Blake*, 302.

59. Sundquist, *Wake the Nations*, 212.

60. As Roberto González Echevarría observes more generally, "Uprisings and other politically motivated acts were staged during holidays . . . to confuse the authorities or to take advantage of the relaxed vigilance and turmoil" (*Cuban Fiestas*, 287).

61. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 204–30. The Lucumí were strongly associated with uprisings in Cuba, including a series of 1812 revolts led by José Antonio Aponte (a "leader of the Shangó Tedum cabildo, a prominent practitioner of Lucumí religion, and a member of the Ogboni, a powerful secret society of Yorubaland" [Reid, "The Yoruba in Cuba," 116]) and the arrest of Lucumí cabildo leader Juan Nepomuceno Prieto on suspicions of fomenting a slave rebellion in 1835. On these rebellions, see Childs, *Aponte Rebellion*; Lovejoy, *Prieto*. On La Escalera, see Paquette, *Sugar*; Reid-Vasquez, *Year of the Lash*; Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion*.

62. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*. On La Regla Lucumí and Santería, see Murray, *Santería*; Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World*; Brown, *Santería Enthroned*; Cros Sandoval, *Worldview*; Olupona and Abiodun, *Ifá Divination*.

63. While I want to be careful not to project worldviews onto the fictional captives, the setting (the Bight of Benin—a key locus of Cuba's illegal slave trade) strengthens the supposition that they were familiar with Changó. Not only is the deity central to many religions and cosmologies in the region (Cros Sandoval, *Worldview*, 223–36), but of the 48,000 Africans sold into transatlantic slavery from Dahomey in the 1850s, Patrick Manning estimates that about 38,000 were Yoruba (Manning, *Slavery*, 335). Determining the ethnicities of enslaved Africans, however, is notoriously challenging in this period because the now-illegal traffic disincentivized recordkeeping and the records that were kept used ethnic monikers that reflected port of sale rather than individuals' origins (G. M. Hall, *Slavery*; Falola and Childs, "Yoruba Diaspora"; Eltis, "Diaspora of Yoruba Speakers"). Moreover, centuries of trade had transformed many Africans in coastal regions into multicultural polyglots that Ira Berlin famously termed Atlantic Creoles (*Many Thousands Gone*). Though the extent of Delany's knowledge of these cultures is uncertain, he was at least familiar with Changó. His maternal grandfather was "an African prince, from the Niger valley regions" named Shango "from that of a great African deity of protection, which is represented in their worship as a ram's head with the attribute of fire" (Rollin, *Life*, 16).

64. Reid, "Yoruba in Cuba," 120.

65. Delany, *Blake*, 228.

66. Robinson, "We're for Freedom," 187.

67. Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 6.

68. McGann, "Notes," 328n206; Delany, *Report*, 252.

69. Delany, *Blake*, 226.

70. While Black invocations of Ethiopia were common during this period, an especially influential example is Henry Highland Garnet's lecture, "The Past and Present Condition, and the Destiny of the Colored Race" (1848), which not only likely inspired Delany's title for his 1852 tract, but, as Shreve shows, also deeply impacted his thinking on Black nationalism, including *Blake* ("Exodus," 470). Additionally, Abyssa's name parallels Delany naming his youngest daughter Ethiopia, which Tolagbe Ogunleye reads as a manifestation of his investments in the Pan-Africanist philosophy known as Ethiopianism and "his lifelong strivings to awaken Africans in America to the ancient wisdom, traditions, and legendary instructions of that nation as well as to the entire African continent" ("Dr. Martin Robison Delany," 645). On Ethiopianism, see Nurhussein, *Black Land*.

71. Delany, *Blake*, 223.

72. Delany, *Blake*, 211.

73. Delany, *Blake*, 200.

74. In the 1850s, the Kru were "cultural middlemen as well as boatmen and stevedores" in Liberia, confirming Delany's observations. "Their work interfaced with the polyglot economies of the Atlantic, and so did their identities. Some learned English and other European languages to facilitate social intercourse. . . . They were more or less at home anywhere in western Africa, from Monrovia to Angola" (Clegg, *Price of Liberty*, 77–78).

75. Otero, "Èṣù," 208. See also Russell, *Legba's Crossing*.

76. Pettway, *Cuban Literature*, 146–47.

77. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 106.

78. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 106; Delany, *Blake*, 84.

79. On these readerships, see Wilson, "Brief Wondrous Life"; Fagan, *Black Newspaper*, 119–41.

80. Ernest, *Liberation Historiography*, 221.

81. Boutelle, "Manifest Diaspora."

82. On convention proceedings as a genre, see Spires, *Practice of Citizenship*, 87–88.

83. Cuban political exiles living in the United States complicated debates over annexation and nationalism. Over decades, small enclaves of wealthy white exiles in Philadelphia, New Orleans, and New York established robust print and social networks that intensified debates over the island's fate. The powerful Cuban junta in New York, for example, continued to push diplomatic policies aimed at annexation, while an increasingly vocal nationalist press amplified the arguments for independence (Lazo, *Writing to Cuba*). In the 1860s, though, immigration from Cuba increased and diversified dramatically. Many sought employment in the burgeoning tobacco industry in Key West and New York, and as war broke out later in the decade, Cubans fled to the United States in unprecedented numbers (Poyo, *With All*; Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars, and Revolution*).

84. Knight, *Slave Society*, 155.

85. Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 37. Céspedes's manifesto called for "la emancipación, gradual y bajo indemnización, de la escalvitud [the gradual emancipation of slavery with indemnification]," demonstrating a cautious pragmatism designed to build as broad a coalition as possible rather than build on egalitarian ideals (Céspedes, "Manifiesto," 622). Despite this declaration, the revolution remained highly ambivalent about emancipation: "Few policies concerning abolition had limited effects, and few remained in place for long" (Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 27), leaving most enslaved Cubans "unequivocally enslaved" throughout the war (Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, 83). See also Knight, *Slave Society*, 154–78. This ambivalence, as David Sartorius shows, opened the door for the Spanish to recruit enslaved Cubans to fight against the insurgency through appeals to loyal subjectivity and promises of freedom (*Ever Faithful*, 94–127).

86. Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 50. In winter 1869, a widely reprinted report from the "Cuban correspondent of the *New York Times*" claimed that Spain planned to manumit all enslaved Cubans and indenture them to estates for ten-year terms, during which they would be educated and evangelized. This labor force would then be supplemented with more forced laborers from Africa, and this cycle "of manumission and of importation [would] be carried on *ad infinitum*" ("Scheme for Reopening the African Slave Trade," *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 30 December 1869).

87. Daut, "Beyond 'America for the Americans,'" 193.

88. "Cuban Belligerency," *New York Times*, 20 January 1870. Clay's often-interrupted speech was so terrible that the *New York Times* opined, "What sin have the Cubans committed to deserve this punishment!" ("Mr. Cassius M. Clay as the Modern Perseus," 21 January 1870). The elision of slavery was especially noticeable since Greeley and many of his slated speakers—including Henry Ward Beecher and Clay—were prominent abolitionists before the war and the "mixed audience" at the Cooper Institute that night likely included notable Black activists.

89. "Cuban Belligerency," *New York Times*, 20 January 1870.

90. Hall addressed a crowd of "about 2,000, chiefly Cubans," on the subject of independence a year earlier at Steinway Hall ("Cuban Independence," *New York Times*, 26 March 1869), and about a month later, a subsequent meeting at the Cooper Institute featured a large audience composed of what the *New York Times* derisively called a "very amiscellaneous [*sic*] character, the majority of those present certainly not belonging to the intelligent classes" ("Cuban Independence," 5 May 1869).

91. "The Cuban Demonstration," *New York Times*, 5 April 1870.

92. "The Cuban Demonstration," *New York Times*, 5 April 1870. Because of the prominent Cuban population in New York and the revolutionaries' efforts to circulate their message as widely as possible, the Spanish text was readily available and there were likely several different translations. Céspedes, for example, sent a copy with a letter he wrote to Secretary of State William H. Seward only two weeks after the Grito de Yara (Céspedes, *Escritos*, 13).

93. Céspedes, "Manifiesto," 622.

94. "The Cuban Demonstration," *New York Times*, 5 April 1870. The image of Cuba in chains echoes Cuban nationalists' rhetoric, which commonly mobilized slavery tropes to illustrate the power dynamics of colonizer and colonized. See, for example,

the poetry of exiled Cubans living in the United States in Montes-Huidobro, *El laud del desterrado* (1858).

95. P. Ortiz, *African American*, 75.

96. For more on Scottron, see Mirabal, *Suspect Freedoms*, 91–96; "Samuel R. Scottron," *Cleveland Gazette*, 4 June 1887.

97. Duane, *Educated for Freedom*.

98. See Hutchinson, *"Let Your Motto,"* 58–70; Schor, *Henry Highland Garnet*, 110–34; Duane, *Educated for Freedom*, 147–79.

99. *Slavery in Cuba*, 3.

100. *Slavery in Cuba*, 3.

101. Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism*, 129–52. The anxiety that white commentators might reduce the organization's investments in the Cuban Revolution to a facile essentialist position rooted in racial identity was warranted. The *New York Times*, for example, wrote of Garnet's keynote that "he sympathized with the movement of the Cuban patriots, if for no other reason than this: . . . [their] Constitution provided that all the inhabitants of the island should be absolutely free" ("The Cuban Negroes—an Enthusiastic Meeting of the Cubans Last Night," 14 December 1872).

102. *Slavery in Cuba*, 5.

103. Boutelle, "Greater Still in Death."

104. *Slavery in Cuba*, 17.

105. Garnet, *Past and Present Condition*, 17. The poem is not Plácido's. Its rigid structure (three quintains, each with four lines in iambic tetrameter and the final line in iambic pentameter) and rhyme scheme (ABABB) suggest that the poem was composed in English, not Spanish. Instead, its provenance seems to be a contributor to the *New York Tribune* using the pseudonym "HUMANITY" ("Placido—Cuba—Liberty," 18 August 1847). Notably, Garnet's speech borrows several key phrases from this article's biographical sketch of Plácido.

106. Garnet, *Past and Present Condition*, 15–16.

107. Garnet, *Past and Present Condition*, 16; *Slavery in Cuba*, 17.

108. *Slavery in Cuba*, 17.

109. Garnet, *Past and Present Condition*, 16.

110. *Slavery in Cuba*, 16.

111. Spires, *Practice of Citizenship*, 81.

112. *OED Online*, "wash (*v.*)," June 2021, www.oed.com/view/Entry/225924.

113. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 40-41; Morejón, "Invisible Afro-America," quoted in Davies, *Black Women*, 12–13.

114. *OED Online*, "wash (*v.*)," June 2021, www.oed.com/view/Entry/225924.

115. Foreman, "Black Organizing," 29.

116. Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*, 242.

117. *Slavery in Cuba*, 5.

118. As Edlie Wong notes, the *Cuba Commission Report* (1876) that British, French, and Chinese officials produced during the Ten Years' War "furthered the indelible association between black chattel slavery and Chinese labor that later influenced United States immigration legislation and public debates over Chinese exclusion" (*Racial Reconstruction*, 19). See also Jung, *Coolies and Cane*; Lowe, *Intimacies*. Later in his career,

Scottron continued this fight, publishing a critique of the *Boston Herald*'s argument that Chinese immigrants would not become good US-American citizens, countering this position favorably with a comparative history of African Americans and Chinese Americans in the United States (*Chinese vs. Negroes* [1899]).

119. Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 5.

120. *Slavery in Cuba*, 10.

121. The Hon. Gerrit Smith to the Cuban Anti-Slavery Committee, New York, Broadside 1873, Cuban Heritage Collection, Special Collections Library, University of Miami.

122. "Cuban Anti-Slavery Meeting—Address and Resolutions," *Baltimore Sun*, 14 February 1873; "Sympathy for Cuba in Philadelphia"; *Christian Recorder*, 13 February 1873. According to Gerald Horne, Black activists convened at Key West also, and by summer, there were even plans for an international CASS convention in New Orleans (*Race to Revolution*, 136). After the *Virginius* affair in October/November 1873, Black activists rallied in Washington, D.C., to express their solidarity with Cuba once again ("Sympathy for Struggling Cuba," *Evening Star*, 28 November 1873). The *Virginius* affair also made the agenda of the Louisiana State Colored Men's Convention ("The Louisiana Colored Men," *New York Times*, 28 November 1873; "State Colored Men's Convention," *New Orleans Republican*, 18 November 1873). See Leary, "Four Million Freedman."

123. "Cuban Independence," *Elevator*, 15 February 1873; "Cuba," *New National Era*, 23 January 1873; "The Cuban Republic," *New National Era*, 13 February 1873. Douglass was slated to address a "mass meeting" of "the colored citizens of the District of Columbia" on Thanksgiving eve 1873 and "give expression to their sympathy for the Cuban cause," but according to the proceedings of that event, he never spoke ("Washington News," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 18 November 1873). Instead, he lectured elsewhere in the capital that night, "unbosom[ing] himself for the first time in regard to his personal connection with the John Brown raid" ("Frederick Douglass and the John Brown Raid," *Buffalo Weekly Courier*, 26 November 1873).

124. P. Ortiz, *African American*, 71–94

125. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, 560; "Thoughts as They Occur," *Elevator*, 26 October 1872.

126. *Slavery in Cuba*, 28.

127. Bruce, *Origins*, xii.

128. "Petition to Accord Belligerent Rights to Cuba," *New York Times*, 20 February 1873; "Belligerent Rights Demanded," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, 13 November 1873.

129. Pasternak, *Rise Now*, 146–47.

Coda

1. Throughout this coda, I capitalize "Great" and "Greatness" to signal the discourses of US-American exceptionalism mobilized by MAGA.

2. As Abram Van Engen observes, "President Trump campaigned on the vague notion that we were once great and now we are not, but he never offered any details about what he meant or how he understood America's past. *When* were we great? What did

greatness mean? How did it look or feel?" (*City on a Hill*, 280). The slogan's vagueness notwithstanding, the eras most commonly associated with MAGA's "Again" are tellingly moments of economic growth accompanied by strong white backlash designed to regulate access to that wealth. For many, it invokes the swelling white suburban prosperity after World War II before the hard-won victories of the civil rights era incrementally democratized access to education, voting, housing, and capital. For other pundits, because MAGA reanimates Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign slogan ("Let's Make America Great Again"), "Again" also invokes this mythologized conservative heyday of corporate deregulation, the racist war on drugs, the slashing of social safety nets just as they began benefiting people of color, the dramatic expansion of the prison system, and the maliciously ignored AIDS epidemic that decimated queer communities and communities of color. The indeterminacy of "Again," Ronald Brownstein argues, thereby "evoke[s] a hazy earlier time when American life worked better for the overwhelmingly white, heavily blue-collar coalition drawn to [Trump]" and thereby avoids scrutiny that would quickly expose the white nationalism beneath this patriotic veneer: "The growing groups long eclipsed in American life have no idealized past moment they are longing to restore . . . [and] few are likely to believe people like them enjoyed more opportunities decades ago. . . . For all of these groups, the past that Trump evokes is one that kept them subordinate, in the shadows, or worse" ("Trump's Rhetoric of White Nostalgia," *Atlantic*, 2 June 2016).

3. Nineteenth-century anxieties about "miscegenation" fomenting cultural decay or yielding sterile offspring, for example, are rich source material for modern fearmongering around "white genocide" and the great replacement theory, in which global crises propelling increased immigration from non-European regions and shifting cultural norms pose existential threats to the enduring white cultural, political, and economic hegemony (Aaron Blake, "How Republicans Learned to Stop Worrying and Embrace 'Replacement Theory'—by Name," *Washington Post*, 27 September 2021).

4. Amanda Taub, "'White Nationalism,' Explained," *New York Times*, 21 November 2016.

5. Eyal, *Young America Movement*, 3. While Reynolds helpfully differentiates the conservative aesthetics of the New York–based literary movement from the passionate rhetoric of the political movement, many of the now-canonical authors nevertheless shared the stylistic verve (if not always the ideological commitments) of the political movement (*Beneath the American Renaissance*, 276–78).

6. Eyal, *Young America Movement*, 6. See Widmer, *Young America*, 64–124.

7. Widmer, *Young America*, 66; "The True Title," *New York Morning News*, 27 December 1845.

8. "Democracy and Literature," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, August 1842, 196.

9. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*, vii.

10. Sundquist, *Empire and Slavery*; Powell, *Ruthless Democracy*; Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations*; Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense*.

11. Christian, "Race for Theory," 49.

12. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*, 561–68.

13. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*, ix.

14. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, 585.

15. Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken," 374, 371, 381.

16. In the 1960s, Buckley helped found a campus group for conservative students (Young Americans for Freedom) that catalyzed a tidal shift in conservative politics, leading to the GOP's nomination of far-right candidate Barry Goldwater for president in 1964 and its adoption of the Southern strategy, which effectively mobilized evangelicalism and the carefully coded language of white supremacy to transform the South into the Republican stronghold it is today. As Heather Cox Richardson argues, this transformation of the GOP into a nativist, white nationalist party in the 1960s accelerated under Reagan, whose acting résumé prompted Republicans to embrace "images of the American West to sell their brand of politics," including frontier mythologies of bootstrap individualism, imperial cowboy masculinity, and whiteness under siege that grew out of Manifest Destiny (*To Make Men Free*, 241). Even the name of Turning Point USA—which operates the infamous Professor Watchlist website—echoes the millennialism of the Young America movement.

17. Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken," 374.

18. Morrison, "Making America White Again," *New Yorker*, 16 November 2016.

19. Further elaborating these dynamics, Ta-Nehisi Coates extends Morrison's arguments by claiming that "whiteness is neither notional nor symbolic, but is the very core of [Trump's] power," his commitment to which "is matched only by the depth of popular disbelief in the power of whiteness" ("First White President," *Atlantic*, 15 October 2017).

20. "1619 Project," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 August 2019, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html.

21. President's Advisory 1776 Commission, *1776 Report*, 1. This invocation of a "city on a hill" more directly invokes Ronald Reagan's preponderance of the phrase than its original use in John Winthrop's sermon (Van Engen, *City on a Hill*, 271–86).

22. Michelle Goldberg, "DeSantis Allies Plot the Hostile Takeover of a Liberal College," *New York Times*, 9 January 2023; Benjamin Wallace-Wells, "What Is Ron DeSantis Doing to Florida's Public Liberal-Arts College?" *New Yorker*, 22 February 2023.

23. President's Advisory 1776 Commission, *1776 Report*, 30–31.

24. Graff, "Nondebate about Critical Race Theory."

25. For an overview of book banning legislation and its effects, see "Banned in the USA," *PEN America*, 19 September 2022, www.pen.org/report/banned-usa-growing-movement-to-censor-books-in-schools.

26. Amelia Nierenberg, "Virginia's Fight over *Beloved*," *New York Times*, 3 November 2021.

27. Dana Williams, "Virginia Governor Race Highlights Irony of Banning *Beloved* from Schools," *NBC News*, 29 October 2021, www.nbcnews.com/think/politics-policy/irony-ban-beloved-virginia-can-found-pages-book-rcna4081.

28. Morrison, *Beloved*, 324.

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