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## Introduction to the Annotated Edition of Frederick Douglass's Unpublished "Slavery"

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SPECIAL SECTION  
ON FREDERICK DOUGLASSIntroduction to the Annotated Edition  
of Frederick Douglass's Unpublished  
"Slavery"**Leslie Leonard**

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In June 1894 the Historical Department of the Harvard Publishing Company, housed in New York, announced its plans for a twenty-two-chapter "illustrated history of the Afro-American race . . . dating from 1619, when they first arrived in the country, up to the present time," including "biographical sketches of prominent men and women of the race."<sup>1</sup> Following their announcement, the company sent a letter of request, a title page, a single-paged preface, and a table of contents to Frederick Douglass's Washington, DC, home at Cedar Hill. (The missive was addressed, as was all of his mail at this time, to the Honorable Frederick Douglass.) Although the volume was never published, sometime between 1894 and his death in February 1895 Douglass drafted and then began revisions on his own lengthy contribution to the proposed twenty-two chapter volume, an essay simply entitled "Slavery." Selected by neither Philip Foner nor John Blassingame for their comprehensive editions of Douglass's writings, it has remained, for the most part, unknown and unread in the Library of Congress archives.<sup>2</sup> The rediscovery and publication of this essay today occurs at an apt moment, as it both contributes to the long trajectory of Douglass scholarship and speaks compellingly to current concerns of continued anti-Black racism. In this short introduction, I will locate this essay in the context of Douglass's lengthy career and provide an overview of the key contributions it makes to our current understanding of his thought.

Broadly speaking, Douglass scholarship has progressed from an initial emphasis on his youth to a more comprehensive engagement

with the work he produced across his long career, including the texts he wrote near the end of his life.<sup>3</sup> As the field has traversed this arc, it has also moved from an almost exclusive focus on Douglass's autobiographies toward more wide-ranging interest in his speeches and other writings, both before and after the Civil War.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, recent scholarship has concerned itself less with questions about Douglass's identity (as one who had "experienced slavery in [his] own person") and more with his work as a philosopher, democratic activist, and political theorist.<sup>5</sup> Thirty years ago few scholars were aware that Douglass once explicitly claimed to be a political philosopher who brought what he had experienced in enslavement to the challenges of democratic citizenship and US politics.<sup>6</sup>

Yet it is precisely as a philosopher and activist that Douglass revisits the subject of enslavement in "Slavery," both to correct the historical record and to offer a philosophical response to the post-Reconstruction resurgence of violent anti-Black racism. It does so, as I shall explain below, in four ways. First, Douglass's essay rethinks the meaning of enslavement in the light of post-emancipation racism. Second, it seeks to forge a usable past for Black Americans confronting the "long after-life" of slavery. Third, it combats the values enshrined in the Anglo-Saxonist ideology that purportedly lent legitimacy to white racism. And, finally, fourth, it advances a set of Black countervalues born of the experience of enslavement. As I will show, Douglass's thinking in this essay—especially with regard to this last point—proves as controversial as it is timely.

The text, as it exists in the Library of Congress archives, includes sixty-five typed pages plus an understated title page.<sup>7</sup> In the margins, Douglass has made a series of handwritten edits, interrupting the text now and then with a variety of strike-throughs, corrected spellings, common editor's symbols, and revisions in his cramped cursive. The edits appear throughout the text, varying from minor changes—crossing out "and," changing "of" into "to," adding commas—to more extensive rewrites or interesting alterations. For example, on the first page, Douglass's deletion of the word "recent" clarifies that it is only the "voluminous discussion" of enslavement that is recent and not "the existence of slavery" itself, which, as his essay shows, has a lengthy global history.

Douglass valued "revision, rather than completion," as Robert Levine has noted.<sup>8</sup> He revisits, reworks, and reimagines his own experiences throughout his oeuvre and across his lifetime. Readers today will note that same approach in "Slavery"<sup>9</sup> as Douglass consistently returns to

past arguments and previous ideas, drawing upon a variety of sources often with little indication of what is quoted material, recitation from memory, or original thought.<sup>10</sup> In the hope of preserving the process behind Douglass's essay, including both his drafting and his proofreading, I have transcribed the text as it appears in the archive, complete with his edits.

Although "Slavery" exists as an unpublished text-in-process, the essay nonetheless provides crucial insights into Douglass's thinking at the end of the century, particularly as he was writing for an audience who, as he says, "now know little or nothing about [slavery] either in theory or in practice."<sup>11</sup> Douglass's work no longer calls for slavery's abolition but instead hopes to lodge an accurate account of it in the nation's historical record and address the violent effects of its afterlife; offering an expansive overview, beginning with the earliest instances of global slavery and ending with a critique of the post-Reconstruction United States.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, by beginning his history of US chattel slavery with other, previous systems of enslavement, Douglass seeks to show not only how enslavement became foundational to the United States but also how it was maintained throughout the years by Christianity, a belief in Black inferiority, and white benevolence. As a result, Douglass rapidly switches from histories of enslavement to the more specific history of US slavery, abolition efforts, and the role of Christian churches in upholding slavery throughout the South.<sup>13</sup>

Douglass's essay bears the distinct imprint of at least three influences of the post-Reconstruction moment in which he wrote it:<sup>14</sup> the weakening resolve of the Republican party to defend Black rights, the rise of anti-Black violence, and the northern push to quickly reintegrate the South into the Union.<sup>15</sup> By the 1890s, Douglass's growing skepticism had turned to despair that the Republican Party could no longer be counted on to defend the rights of Black Americans. Leniency toward the South, the removal of federal troops, and the premature end of Reconstruction made evident the increased willingness of Republican politicians to conciliate the South in the service of reelection. An "epidemic" of lynching, as Douglass had named it, had swept the South and was rapidly spreading elsewhere in the country.<sup>16</sup>

Douglass's ongoing concerns about anti-Black violence were transformed into action in 1892 when he met the dynamic, young, Black activist Ida B. Wells; as a result of their meeting, he published "Lynch Law in the South." By the time he composed "Slavery," only a mere two years later, he had focused his attention fully on the most significant problem

facing Black communities—the extrajudicial, state-sanctioned murder of Black citizens by white mobs. Douglass’s famous “Lessons of the Hour” speech, which debuted in 1894, reflected this marked shift from his previous arguments. Whereas his earlier speeches and essays had frequently drawn upon personal experience, Glen McClish notes that “Douglass’s 1890s rhetoric . . . deemphasized the personal, specific details of individual injustices . . . in order to focus on general arguments, identify key lines of reasoning, and scrutinize the nature of evidence as well as the assumptions undergirding arguments.”<sup>17</sup> In both his “Lessons of the Hour” speech, denouncing the violence aimed at the Black community at large, and throughout “Slavery,” which follows the larger repercussions of slavery, Douglass broadens his gaze to history at large, writing from a generalized and thus more seemingly objective perspective to speak in defense of the Black community as a whole.

“Slavery” criticizes the north’s haste to move past the Civil War, forgiving and reconciling with the rebellious states of the former Confederacy. Across the essay, Douglass insists that the “new South” is merely “a new name for an old thing,” a continuance evident in the violence and injustice hiding in plain sight.<sup>18</sup> Rejecting this supposed reform, Douglass urges his readers to pay attention to the violence that the South (and the nation at large) continue to perpetrate against Black subjects, sometimes spectacular in its horrors but not always. White citizens may have made repeated calls for national reconciliation, both in terms of the war and centuries of horror and enslavement that preceded it, but Douglass’s essay strongly refuses both; instead, his work serves as a monument of memory—a vow to remember and to continue to unveil the violent past and the continued violence of the present.<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously, in his attempts to expose the fraud of the new South, Douglass details the lengthy history of slavery to highlight “the depths” from which Black Americans had risen and establish the lasting effects of the slavery system in the form of anti-Black legislation and violence.<sup>20</sup> With this continued violence in mind, Douglass’s “Slavery” offers its new generation of readers two important interventions: a usable past for Black Americans and a repudiation of resurgent Anglo-Saxonism.

In the service of making the past usable to the present, Douglass frequently approaches the work of anti-slavery, the work of progress, of justice, and of moral responsibility as both inevitable and also requiring constant struggle to bring that inevitability into being by “anticipating” it (to use Jeffrey Insko’s helpful term).<sup>21</sup> At the end of the century, and in a post-chattel America, Douglass turns from imagining a future

of progress, to instead unearthing and rediscovering the principles that undergirded the anti-slavery movement. This text, then, might be thought of as a text of “reactivation.” Douglass is neither providing a neat bookend to his years of work, nor is he treating history as past, an object to be studied. Instead, he recounts, rediscovers, and recapitulates for a new generation facing new (and, at the same time, very old) problems.

The project of crafting a usable past for Black Americans had been ongoing among Black public intellectuals.<sup>22</sup> Significantly, five years earlier, Douglass’s son had faced criticism for his support of a new John Brown statue. As the editor of the New York newspaper the *Age* wrote:

The whites have embalmed the memory of John Brown in marble and vellum and Fred Douglass Jr. now wants colored people to embalm it in brass; while the memory of the black hero is preserved neither in marble, vellum, or brass. What we protest against is the Negro worship of white men and the memory of white men, to the utter exclusion of colored men equally patriotic and self-sacrificing.<sup>23</sup>

As the editor’s critique makes clear, “the memory of white men” came at the cost of excluding “the memory of the black hero.” In the mid- and late century, published volumes of white American history proliferated; yet preserving the memory of white men did little to impede an increase in anti-Black violence, designed to obliterate all “memory of the black hero.” One of Douglass’s aims in “Slavery,” then, was to respond to the elisions of white history with a more accurate account.<sup>24</sup> However, as he himself had written forty years prior, “our history has been but a track of blood,” inseparable from the trauma of enslavement.<sup>25</sup> How then might he narrate an accurate account of American chattel slavery while also making that past, so full of blood and horror, usable for Black Americans seeking to navigate the new challenges of a post-slavery United States?

One way, it seems, was to propose alternative ways of naming heroism: “the black hero” as the *Age* editor names him, might (or perhaps must) look different from the white hero. Like his desire to create a usable past for African Americans, Douglass similarly proposes an alternate image of the Black hero. Drawing from Black Americans’ collective past, Douglass pays particular attention to the resilience of Black Americans, their survival, their tenacity, and their ability to rise from

beneath the weight of centuries of oppression and violence. This focus on resilience rather than revolution or even resistance marks a seismic shift in Douglass's thinking. Whereas forty years before he had praised the revolutionary call of Liberty or Death, asserting that "there was not one among us, who would not rather have been shot down, than pass away life in hopeless bondage," he now firmly declares that "liberty is great, but life is greater." If, as he writes, Black Americans have "been taunted with [their] failure to strike for . . . freedom" through revolutionary action, Douglass works to reverse that judgment, representing supposed failure as strength, perseverance, and survival in the face of unrelenting oppression.<sup>26</sup> In the view from the end of the century, the ability of Black subjects to "bear and forbear, and to submit to wrong for the moment and bide their time," serves as "proof of [their] kinship with the greatest of mankind."<sup>27</sup>

Douglass's argument—it is Black Americans' ability to forebear and endure rather than fight and, potentially, perish that marks their strength—is controversial.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, on the surface, he appears to be discouraging rebellion and violent resistance altogether; and, at least partially, this viewpoint was a response to the changed political landscape in which Black rebellion seemed less plausible. However, his objective, despite its problematic implications, arose from both pragmatic and principled positions. Pragmatically, while the project of abolition was made possible through cross-racial coalition and structured organizations able to identify and act against proslavery opposition, by the 1890s the American Anti-Slavery Society had disbanded; Black American men had, at least on paper, attained formal citizenship; and the once-clear distinction between ally and foe (pro/anti-slavery) had dissolved as Black Americans faced new forms of violence and oppression, some explicit and some subtle, from whites now ready to sacrifice Black lives at the altar of a reunited nation and a sanitized past.

These reasons would perhaps be enough to argue against violent resistance in a world in which the oppressor was less recognizable and the structures of oppression had changed. In such a world, Douglass suggests, endurance has become a key means of resistance. However, he offers a principled motivation for his argument as well, proposing an alternative set of values to Anglo-Saxonism. While Douglass's work had long provided explicit counterarguments to baseless theories of white superiority advanced by the fledgling American school of ethnology, the more recent appropriation of evolutionary theory into racial "science" once more made it necessary to repurpose and expand his previ-

ous arguments; he needed to reject the resurgence of Anglo-Saxonism such theories authorized. Douglass, deftly uses popular Anglocentric histories throughout “Slavery” to reject Anglo-Saxonism, an effective use of reappropriation that also forwards a more accurate depiction of the anti-Black violence constantly faced by Black Americans both during and after enslavement. This shift in argumentative strategy lends the moments in which he does revisit his previous arguments significant weight. Indeed, some of his intended readers would have recognized that his earlier claims needed little alteration, as the fight against anti-Black violence and oppression remained ongoing. The tactics Douglass had relied upon in the late 1840s to demonstrate Anglo-American hypocrisy were still necessary fifty years later as he fought against the continued horror inflicted upon Black Americans.

If Anglo-Saxon ideology—individualism, force, revolution, dominance—proved most responsible for anti-Black violence in the US, then perhaps a more radical move would be to reject those ideals altogether and embrace, instead, different moral principles. That is, if anti-Blackness is the product of a society that values strength and violence, then the answer cannot be more strength and violence but rather something else altogether. We might return momentarily to the critique faced by Frederick Douglass Jr. in response to his support for a John Brown statue.<sup>29</sup> Bearing in mind the association of Anglo-Saxon values with the American discourse of individualism and self-made men, we might reread the editor’s critique in a different light. While the editor understandably hopes to have Black heroes to stand beside white ones, he does not consider that perhaps *any* world that produces “heroes” on the Anglo-Saxon model is potentially anti-Black. Douglass’s argument here may offer an alternative view—to most effectively combat the ideals of Anglo-Saxonism and white supremacy, Black Americans, already differentiated from whites through racialization, must also differentiate themselves from white Americans through a fresh set of ideals and ethics. Douglass’s response to Anglo-Saxonism may be read then as a means of reimagining the world, rather than succumbing to it, anticipating other modes of Black resistance which would appear over the long afterlife of enslavement.<sup>30</sup>

Douglass was not alone in contesting Anglo-Saxonism’s virtues by eschewing “fiery temper . . . hasty impatience . . . [and] deeds of daring” as incompatible with “a high and enduring civilization.”<sup>31</sup> In the post-Reconstruction era, in which the frequency of anti-Black violence continued to increase and amid ongoing claims that Black Americans were



unfit for the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship, a number of Black thinkers moved beyond claims for more equality and began asserting Black moral superiority. Anna Julia Cooper, for instance, had written two years earlier about America's "race problem" (in *A Voice from the South*), "America needs the Negro for ballast if for nothing else," serving as "counterpart to the cold and calculating Anglo-Saxon."<sup>32</sup> While Cooper's vision of which Black virtues best oppose Anglo-Saxonism ("tropical warmth and spontaneous emotionalism") could strike many readers today as deeply mistaken, W. E. B Du Bois offers a similar argument that may be more palatable. His 1890 Harvard commencement address, "Jefferson Davis as a Representative of Civilization," contests the ideology of Anglo-Saxon superiority by arguing, as Douglass does, that Black "submission . . . is rather an evidence of superiority of race" compared with, what Du Bois calls, Anglo-Saxonism's "idea of the strong man—Individualism coupled with the rule of might."<sup>33</sup> Even more explicitly, Du Bois suggests that although Jefferson Davis and others like him may be "noble" when "judged by the whole standard of Teutonic civilization," one must recognize that "there is something fundamentally incomplete about that standard."<sup>34</sup> Du Bois draws a marked difference between "civilization" and "Teutonic civilization," the former built upon progress and just ideals, the latter a racist and violent empire propagated by false tales of heroism and daring.<sup>35</sup>

Problematic as they may be to many readers today, these valorizations of Black "submission" all seek to *affirm* the power and abilities of Black Americans by offering their survival and forbearance as a direct counterpart (or "ballast") to whites' continued fetishization of Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, these thinkers' views arguably anticipate recent rethinking of the nature of Black resistance. Douglass's attention to vulnerability and forbearance calls to mind what Kevin Quashie has called the "inward" life of "quiet," what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten describe as the Black "undercommons," with its turn away from "policy" and "interests" in preference for "militant preservation," and even what scholars like Audre Lorde and Sara Ahmed have suggested is the power of survival in the face of structures intent on one's destruction.<sup>37</sup> "Slavery" also partially anticipates the work of those thinkers, particularly Fred Moten, Saidiya Hartman, and Tina Campt, who elaborate the necessity of refusal (particularly refusing participation in structures that have long denied access or even an acknowledgment of one's humanity in order to instead create possibility, "using negation as a generative").<sup>38</sup>

Like “Lessons of the Hour,” which could be cited as an inspiration for the “Black Lives Matter counterargument to the extralegal killing of black people,” “Slavery” has a particular relevance for contemporary readers.<sup>39</sup> Using a metaphor of police violence, “it is not merely the sheriff that holds the prisoner but the nation behind the sheriff,” Douglass insists in the essay, as he had across his career, that the entire nation is responsible for the system of enslavement and the anti-Black racism that survived it.<sup>40</sup> Renewing his demand for reparations, Douglass compels his readers to consider the lasting generational, social, and economic effects of enslavement—an extensive list of “manifold wrongs perpetrated upon the present and past generations”—which white Americans, as “guilty party, to the enslavement of the negro” must begin to meaningfully atone for.<sup>41</sup> The demand for reparations reminds readers that while the strength of Black Americans may lie, for the moment, in patient endurance, it is importantly not a call for submission. Instead, Douglass praises the resilience of Black Americans while acknowledging that it is neither submission nor defeat but perhaps a lying in wait or an outlasting that will end not in further submission but in collecting that which has been long overdue.

Like the *New York Times*’s recent *1619 Project*, which seeks to center Black American experience to rethink discussions of US history, the choice of the Harvard Publishing Company to begin its *Illustrated History* in 1619 and to center “prominent men and women of the race” stands in a long lineage of Black scholars, authors, thinkers, and historians who have labored to correct common misconceptions of US history that implicitly and explicitly center whiteness.<sup>42</sup> Douglass’s own contribution to this project, while highlighting the depths of Black oppression and the resilience of Black Americans, also, and perhaps more importantly, insists upon an understanding of US history that acknowledges and consistently pulls forward the participation and contribution of Black Americans in order to leave readers with the understanding that Black American history is American history and that the latter relies upon the former for its very existence.

Douglass’s “Slavery” provides modern readers with clear historical linkages from enslavement to postbellum violence to our current iterations of the same structures. The official end of enslavement did not change the anti-Black oppression that existed in the United States and the same racist structures that Douglass once fought against as an abolitionist continued into his final years. As modern readers will recognize, the racist ideals that “Slavery” condemns continued long after

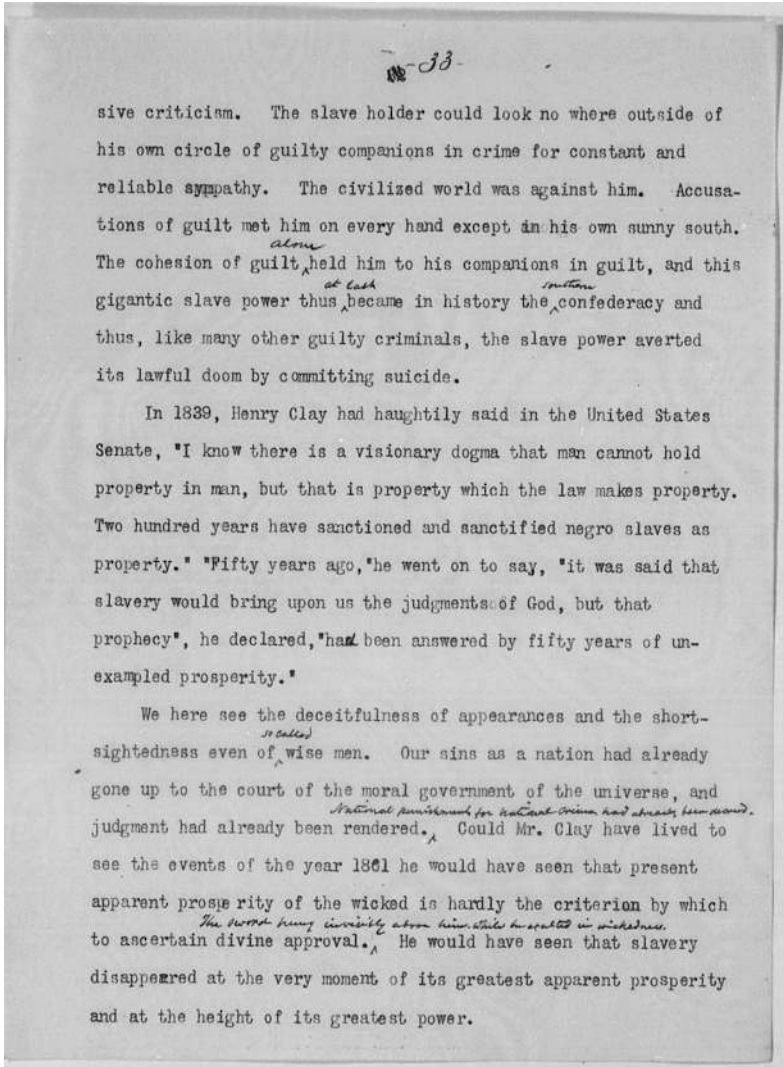


Figure 1. The thirty-third page of Douglass's "Slavery" manuscript as it currently appears in the Library of Congress digital archives. Likely typed on the typewriter still in residence at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. Readers see Douglass's handwritten edits as they appear throughout the text.

Douglass's death at the end of the century: they are still with us today. "Slavery" insists that all readers reexamine U.S. history and demands recognition of, as well as reparation for, the violence of the past. As Douglass's work makes clear, the violence of the present means this is work that still must be done.

## Notes

1. Harvard Publishing Company to Frederick Douglass. Library of Congress, Jun.–Jul. June 2, 1894, 1894. Manuscript/Mixed Material. (<https://www.loc.gov/item/mfd.10009/>); *Cleveland Gazette*, June 16, 1894, Newspaper Archive (<https://newspaperarchive.com/cleveland-gazette-jun-16-1894-p-3/>). This wording also appears in the letter sent to Douglass.

2. *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner, 5 vols. (New York: International, 1950–75); *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, series 1: *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, ed. John W. Blassingame, Peter Hinks, John McKivigan, 5 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979–92).

3. Modern scholarship on Douglass's work may be said to have begun in earnest with the rediscovery of his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, annotated by Benjamin Quarles and published by the John Harvard Library (an imprint of Harvard University Press) in 1960. As classrooms in the 1960s began to include more Black literature, Douglass's *Narrative* became a necessary and widely taught text. In 1988, William Andrews's annotated edition of *My Bondage and My Freedom* appeared, and scholars subsequently turned to the work for the new layers of richness it brought to Douglass's existing autobiography. Still more time passed before a significant body of scholars looked to Douglass's final autobiography, *Life and Times*, aided by the Library of America collection (1994) of Douglass's three autobiographies, edited by Henry Louis Gates. See, for example, the 2014 special issue in the *Journal of African American History* dedicated to *Life and Times*, with an introduction by John McKivigan. John McKivigan, "Rediscovering *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*," *Journal of African American History* 99, no. 1, 2014. Other contributors to this issue include Robin L. Condon, Julie Roy Jeffrey, Robert S. Levine, Peter C. Myers, and Wilson J. Moses.

4. Collected most completely by Phillip S. Foner and John W. Blassingame in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass and The Frederick Douglass Papers*.

5. Douglass, "Slavery." See Nick Bromell, *The Powers of Dignity: The Black Political Philosophy of Frederick Douglass* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021); Neil Roberts, ed., *A Political Companion to Frederick Douglass* (University Press of Kentucky, 2018); Nicholas Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass: In Pursuit of American Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Maurice S. Lee, *Slavery, Philosophy, and American Literature, 1830–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

6. As Douglass writes in his 1867 "Sources of Danger to the Republic": "From this little bit of experience—slave experience—I have elaborated quite a lengthy chapter of political philosophy, applicable to the American people." Blassingame et al., *Douglass Papers*, 4:150.

7. The manuscript's typeface suggests "Slavery" was most likely typed on the Remington typewriter that remains at Douglass's home in Cedar Hill, where he spent much of the late century in between travel.

8. Robert S. Levine, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 2.

9. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Douglass's unpublished 1894 essay was not his first piece to use "Slavery" as its title. In 1885, Douglass composed an entry for a pirated American edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* by the same name, though different in content. This first "Slavery" would finally appear in 1891 and again in a reprinted edition three years later. Although these two pieces differ in content and scope—one an encyclopedia entry recounting US slavery, the other an essay tackling topics from global slavery and histories of abolition to Black resistance and the continued violence of postwar America—nonetheless, they both exhibit Douglass's interest in revisiting the topic of American slavery at the end of the century, often approached by others only as a highly historicized past, rather than an ongoing system with continued impact in the present. Many thanks to John McKivigan ("Rediscovering *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*," *The Frederick Douglass Papers*) for making the connection between these two works and for bringing so much of Douglass's unseen work to light in recent years.

10. Despite the frequent lack of citations or even quotation marks, it is important to note that this work exists in progress. Readers might also understand this seeming-plagiarism as part of a larger tradition of nineteenth-century writing, Black print culture in particular. As Geoffrey Sanborn writes (in the context of William Wells Brown's extensive "plagiarism"), although one may think of such reliance upon other texts as "weakness" and "imaginative and expressive limitations," one might instead, upon noticing the diversity, vastness, and array of sources, see that "it indicates the reverse: an unconstrained resourcefulness, a wide-ranging

awareness of, and freedom with, the materials of one's culture." Geoffrey Sanborn, *Plagiarama! William Wells Brown and the Aesthetic of Attractions* (Columbia University Press, 2016), 15.

11. Douglass, "Slavery."

12. Douglass writes in "What the Black Man Wants" (1865) of the "malignant spirit" of treachery, racism, and violence that will be "hand[ed] down, from sire to son," despite the successful outcome of abolition or the war. Blassingame et al., *Douglass Papers*, 4:63.

13. Douglass frequently wrote about the role of the church in maintaining slavery throughout his speeches and his autobiographies. In 1841 he delivered a speech titled "The Church and Prejudice" at the Plymouth Anti-slavery Society. Five years later he would deliver an address in Paisley Scotland ("The Relation of the Free Church to the Slave Church") calling upon the Christians of Scotland to break with the proslavery churches of the Southern United States.

14. His own personal life at the time similarly speaks of loss and disenchantment. By 1894, Douglass had lost his son and namesake, Frederick Jr., his first wife, Anna, his possible lover, Ottilie Assing, his pregnant granddaughter, Annie, as well as many of his old abolitionist friends and allies. In a letter to Ruth Adams, Douglass notes the passing of so many past acquaintances and morbidly writes, "Sometimes I think it strange that I am yet in the land of the living."

15. Simultaneously, at the end of the century, Douglass inhabited the role of US minister resident and consul general in Haiti, co-commissioned the Haitian pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, and worked directly with Anténor Firmin and Haitian president Florvil Hyppolite. These experiences and interactions no doubt also influenced Douglass's work as he considered the role of the United States in a global capacity, worked alongside Black thinkers from a nation whose independence had been won a century earlier, and encountered the groundbreaking work of Firmin, who pushed anthropology beyond its racist scope to assert equality. See Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races* (1885), trans. Asselin Charles (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

16. Frederick Douglass, "Lynch Law in the South," *North American Review* 155, no. 428 (July 1892): 17–19.

17. Glen McClish, "Frederick Douglass's 'The Lessons of the Hour' and the Ethos of the Sage," "Frederick Douglass's Rhetorical Legacy," ed. Jonathan P. Rossing and John R. McKivigan, special issue, *Rhetoric Review* 37, no. 1 (2018), 50–58, 53.

18. Douglass, "Slavery."

19. For more on North/South reconciliation and sectional relations post-Reconstruction, see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

20. Douglass, "Slavery."

21. As Insko writes, "For Douglass, antislavery exists in an 'ever-present now,' latent and awaiting its activation, or reactivation. The 'causes producing' antislavery, according to Douglass, 'have slumbered in the bosom of nature since the world began' only to be discovered and re-discovered again and again. Thus, the history of antislavery in this sense is both immanent (it already exists) and imminent (always set to happen again)." Jeffrey Insko, *History, Abolition, and the Ever-Present Now in Antebellum American Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 144.

22. Black historians and thinkers had long been engaged in this work. See David Walker, *Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1830); William Cooper Nell, *The Colored Patriots* (1855); George Washington Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880* (1882). See also Thomas Holt, "From Slavery to Freedom and the Conceptualization of African-American History," *The Journal of Negro History* 85.1 (2000), 22–26; John Ernest, "Liberation Historiography: African-American Historians before the Civil War," *American Literary History* 14.3 (2002), 413–443; Pero Gaglio Dagbovie, "Black Women Historians from the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the Dawning of the Civil Rights Movement," *The Journal of African American History* 89.3 (2004), 241–261.

23. Editor of the *Age*, New York (January 26, 1889), in *The Black Press 1827–1890*, ed. Martin E. Dann (New York: Capricorn Books, 1971), 116–17.

24. It is necessary to note that although part of Douglass's goal throughout "Slavery" is to respond directly to many racist beliefs, his work is not merely a counter to these beliefs. Instead, as with all of his works, he advances views of Blackness, global civilization, history, equality, and reparative work that are far more than simply defensive responses to existing

structures. Similarly, while white historical texts abounded during the period, that is not to say that Black historians were not already working to preserve the memories of Black Americans. Douglass's work enters an already extant tradition of Black histories alongside William Cooper Nell, George Washington Williams, and, later, the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Anna Julia Cooper, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, Carter G. Woodson, Earl E. Thorpe, and John Hope Franklin.

25. Philip S. Foner, ed., "Address of Frederick Douglass at the Inauguration of Douglass Institute, Baltimore, October 1, 1865," *Journal of Negro History* 54, no. 2 (1969): 174–83. In his 1893 "Lecture on Haiti," Douglass suggests that this quote is a paraphrase of Daniel O'Connell, whose work greatly influenced him: "It was once said by the great Daniel O'Connell, that the history of Ireland might be traced, like a wounded man through a crowd, by the blood."

26. Douglass, "Slavery."

27. *Ibid.*

28. Douglass made this argument thirty years previously at the inauguration of the Douglass Institute in Baltimore, noting, "The question forced upon us at every moment of our generation has not been, as with other races of men, how shall we adorn, beautify, exalt and ennoble life, but how shall we retain life itself. The struggle with us was not to do, but to be." Philip S. Foner, ed., "Address of Frederick Douglass at the Inauguration of Douglass Institute, Baltimore, October 1, 1865," *Journal of Negro History* (1969).

29. Most likely Timothy Thomas Fortune (1856–1928), who edited the *Age* from 1889 to 1907. Editor of the *Age*, New York.

30. See Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

31. Douglass, "Slavery."

32. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1891), *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, ed. Charles Lemert and Esme Bahn (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998). Douglass himself similarly writes of potentially innate racial characteristics both in "Slavery" and, famously, in his 1869 "Composite Nation." If, as often happened, Anglo-Americans argued for the existence of innate characteristics that proved their superiority, then it follows that Cooper and Douglass would rebut those claims with Black excellence rather than delve into the difficult task of disproving innate racial difference, which was frequently assumed as fact at the time.

33. While Douglass argues that submission is, in fact, strength, Du Bois makes use of a similar principle though names it "the doctrine of the Submissive Man." W. E. B. Du Bois, "Jefferson Davis as a Representative of Civilization" (1890), *W. E. B. Du Bois Papers* (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b196-i029>.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 4. The question immediately arises, might Douglass have read, or been aware of, Du Bois's speech? There is not sufficient evidence to say; however, we do know that reviews of and selections from Du Bois's speech were published in the *New York Herald* (June 26, 1890), in the *Nation* (New York, July 3, 1890), and in *Kate Field's Washington* (October 8, 1890). We also know that Kate Field herself attended Douglass's funeral and wrote about the occasion in her newspaper in 1895. These circles of connection make it possible, but not certain, that Douglass had Du Bois's work in mind.

36. With regard to modern scholarship on slavery, it might be said that Orlando Patterson's book *Slavery and Social Death* has exerted enormous influence over discussions of slavery in literary criticism. Numerous scholars have since criticized the text for its implication that slavery succeeded in effecting the social death of the enslaved. A number of historians have detailed the vibrancy that remained in enslaved communities, a vibrancy and social life that slavery attempted to, but could not effectively, kill. Most importantly, perhaps, we may note how the historiography of slavery in US academia has shifted from "static" definitions of enslaved life to focuses on the "historic transformations in slavery" (Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 5 (2009): 1234). Recent work on slavery has attempted a broader, transatlantic and transhistorical, and more nuanced approach to discussions of both the slave trade and life in enslavement. (We may note a similar approach in Douglass's work here.) See John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 64–81; Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*; James Sweet,



"Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013): 251–72.

37. Kevin Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012). See also Jeffrey Ferguson, "Race and the Rhetoric of Resistance," *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 28, no. 1 (2008), 4–32; Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984); Sarah Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

38. Tina Campt, "Black Visuality and the Practice of Refusal," *Women and Performance* (February 2019), <https://www.womenandperformance.org/ampersand/29-1/campt>; See also Fred Moten and Saidiya Hartman, "To Refuse That Which Has Been Refused to You," *Chimurenga* (2018), <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/to-refuse-that-which-has-been-refused-to-you-2/>.

39. Douglass, "Lessons of the Hour," (1894) in Blassingame et al., *Douglass Papers* 5:575; W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2018), 743.

40. Douglass, "Slavery."

41. Ibid.

42. *The 1619 Project*, *New York Times Magazine*, 2019. The origins of Harvard's decision to commission its project remain unclear, and it is likewise unknown why the project was never ultimately published. Other, similar projects existed in the late nineteenth century, such as George Williams's 1883 *History of the Negro Race in American from 1619 to 1880*, so it may be assumed that Harvard wished to produce a single definitive text in a similar vein written by those directly affected by enslavement. Many more histories would appear in the early years of the twentieth century, including Du Bois's significant body of work and Carter Woodson's *Journal of Negro History* (1915), which also begins in 1619.