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"We Must Fasten Ourselves to our Countrymen": Economic Uplift in the Writing and Editorial Practices of Frederick Douglass

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In February 1853, Frederick Douglass accepted an invitation from Harriet Beecher Stowe to visit her home in Andover, Massachusetts. Douglass had been defending her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* against Martin Delany's attacks for its pro-colonization ending. According to Douglass's subsequent letter to Stowe, dated 8 March 1853, Stowe told him during the visit that she "designed to do something which should permanently contribute to the improvement and elevation of the free colored people in the United States."[1] Douglass, whose writing in the early 1850s expressed a growing commitment to improving the material conditions of the northern Black community, believed a multi-racial industrial college would equip Black youth with the knowledge and the skills to earn a decent living in the mechanical and agricultural arts, and would blunt Southern defenses of chattel slavery. He told Stowe, "The most telling, the most killing refutation of slavery, is the presentation of an industrious, enterprising, upright, thrifty, and intelligent free black population."[2] Inspired by Stowe's offer, over the next two years Douglass expended an enormous amount of time and energy promoting the industrial college in the columns of his newspaper, the committee minutes at national Black conventions, and his work on the second edition of the anti-slavery giftbook, *Autographs for Freedom*. Although the plan to build an industrial college within one hundred miles of Erie, Pennsylvania did not come to fruition and Stowe would provide Douglass just five-hundred thirty-five dollars, a fraction of the $15,000 he believed necessary to build it, Douglass's class-inflected writing in support of the school registers his growing frustration with the Garrisonians and other White middle-class abolitionists who did not seem sufficiently concerned about the meager opportunities for skilled employment for northern Blacks.

Douglass's efforts to raise awareness about his community's material needs coincides with his turn away from the moral suasion practiced by William Lloyd Garrison and his followers, and his turn toward the political activism practiced by wealthy philanthropist Gerrit Smith. Historians have enumerated many of the ways that Douglass broke from Garrison, the man who discovered him in 1841 at an anti-slavery meeting on Nantucket and published his slave narrative in 1845 with the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Boston. Philosophically, Douglass rejected Garrison's uncompromising view of the United States Constitution as a proslavery document and instead saw the practical value of pursuing abolition through the political process; additionally, in light of the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, Douglass advocated justified antislavery violence, a sharp departure from Garrisonian nonviolence.[3] On a personal level, according to John R. McKivigan, "historians have noted that the paternalism of White Garrisonians played a leading role in causing Douglass's alienation

[1] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 December 1853.
[2] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 December 1853.
[3] For a detailed discussion of Douglass's endorsement of violence as a justified response to the Fugitive Slave Law and his growing estrangement from Garrison, see Robert S. Levine, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2016).

from that faction."[4] Robert S. Levine chronicles Douglass's growing frustration with his Garrisonian handlers during his lecture tour to England and their insistence that he simply narrate his life's story without adding polemics.[5]

Incidentally, Douglass's letter, written from Scotland to Garrison and published in the 27 March 1846 issue of *The Liberator,* functions as a harbinger of what I believe is another notable source of the rift between the two men: their varying levels of attention to northern Blacks' working conditions. Discussing the abject poverty that he witnesses firsthand in Ireland, Douglass asserts the necessity that reformers address all types of oppression: "Though I am more closely connected and identified with one class of outraged, oppressed and enslaved people, I cannot allow myself to be insensible to the wrongs and sufferings of any part of the great family of man. I am not only an American slave, but a man, and as such, am bound to use my powers for the welfare of the whole human brotherhood."[6] After describing his encounters with Irish beggars on the streets of Dublin, whose condition he attributes disingenuously to intemperance, likely in a nod to Garrisonian moral suasion, he challenges the readers of *The Liberator*, "He who really and truly feels for the American slave, cannot steel his heart to the woes of others; and he who thinks himself an abolitionist, yet cannot enter into the wrongs of others, has yet to find a true foundation for his anti-slavery faith."[7] Douglass, who had experienced the hardships of supporting his family as a common laborer after he could not find work as a skilled caulker in racially stratified New Bedford, already believed that abolitionists should simultaneously fight to end chattel slavery and to address Blacks' socioeconomic inequality in the northern workplace.

At the same time Douglass was distancing himself from Garrison, he was becoming more aligned with White labor reformers. Demonstrating his familiarity with the rhetoric of reformers like William Heighton and George Lippard in Philadelphia and Robert Dale Owen and Augustine Duganne in New York, Douglass repurposed the labor movement's defense of the producing classes and critique of "merchant princes" to inspire and encourage his younger Black constituents to pursue skilled trades. A multi-racial, coeducational industrial college that combined classical education in literature and skilled training would prepare Black youth to become proud artisans and mechanics, idealized figures within the White-led antebellum labor movement that distinguished "honest" labor from anti-republican exploitation. In his letter proposing the industrial college to Stowe, Douglass deploys his signature correlatives and develops claims that echo the labor movement's pride in independent craftsmanship. "We must become mechanics; we must build as well as live in houses; we must make as well as use furniture . . . We need mechanics as well as ministers. We need workers in iron, wood, clay, and leather . . . To live here as we ought, we must fasten ourselves to our countrymen through their everyday and cardinal wants. We must not only be able to *black* boots, but to *make* them."[8] Although mechanics' livelihoods were under threat in the 1850s as wage labor gradually replaced the apprenticeship system of labor,[9] and the quaint world of the "village blacksmith"

[4] John R. McKivigan, "The Frederick Douglass-Gerrit Smith Friendship and Political Abolitionism in the 1850s," *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 205–32, 205.
[5] Levine, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass*, 81–82.
[6] Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass: Early Years, 1817–1849*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York, International Publishers, 1950), 138.
[7] Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 141.
[8] Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*.
[9] For a fuller discussion of the transition from apprenticeship to wage labor and its impact on the working classes, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850*

that Douglass invokes was becoming a memory of the preindustrial past, he deploys the "mechanic accents" of the White-led labor movement to promote the industrial college, drawing attention to material inequities in the North that he believed Garrison and his followers were largely ignoring.

This essay argues that Douglass's support for an industrial college between 1853–1855 was part of a broader strategy of class-inflected racial uplift that informed his literary output and further alienated him from a mentor who once trumpeted his successes. My comparative analysis of *Frederick Douglass' Paper* with Garrison's *The Liberator* in November and December 1853, two months that mark the height of Douglass's efforts to promote the industrial college, brings Douglass's economic concerns and rhetorical strategies into relief. Along with his newspaper writing and editorial practices, Douglass's class-inflected and sometimes pointed critiques of the Garrisonians that appear in both editions of *Autographs for Freedom* establish him as a pragmatic and class-conscious reformer who spiritedly combined resistance to chattel slavery in the south with resistance to labor exploitation in the north. As per an advertisement that ran in his newspaper in December 1853, the anti-slavery giftbook—like Douglass the reformer—will appeal to "the friends of humanity, and the opposers of every species of Oppression, under whatever garb it assumes, or name it bears."[10]

Situating Douglass's "Ambitious" Industrial College Plan

Douglass's tenacity to establish an industrial college is important not only for gaining a fuller understanding of the context in which the abolitionist leader broke on principle from the Garrisonians, but also for appreciating the flurry of writing and editorial work that reveals Douglass as a pragmatic reformer devoted to economic empowerment. The critiques against predominantly White and middle-class abolitionists that appear in *Autographs for Freedom*, as we will see, are less surprising when viewed in the context of Douglass's championing of a multi-racial and coeducational industrial college, a project that occupied much of his writing in the early 1850s. Douglass's growing attention to the needs of the northern Black community informs the founding of *Frederick Douglass' Paper* in the summer of 1851 when he merged his Rochester-based *The North Star* with the Syracuse-based *Liberty Party Paper*, financed by Gerrit Smith and edited by John L. Thomas. As David W. Blight notes, Douglass's decision to strike a deal with Smith, whose Liberty Party advocated ending chattel slavery through the political process, deepened Douglass's rift with Garrison and his followers.[11] According to John Stauffer, "Douglass embraced the Constitution as an antislavery document" as early as January 1851, shortly after which Smith, who had been frustrated with the editorial work of Thomas, broached the merger.[12] Douglass would become the editor of the new venture, while Smith would take on *The North Star's* debts and provide a monthly subsidy of one-hundred dollars for two years.[13] The Garrisonians, who were displeased that Douglass started his own newspaper in 1847, were further incensed with this new political alliance with Smith. In response, McKivigan states, "The

(New York, Oxford University Press, 1984), and Bruce Laurie, *Artisans Into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1989).

[10] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 16 December 1853.

[11] David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2018), 217.

[12] John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2004), 164.

[13] McKivigan, "The Frederick Douglass-Gerrit Smith Friendship," 214–15.

Garrisonian press, led by the *Liberator*, launched what Douglass dubbed a 'war of destruction' on his new newspaper."[14]

In addition to their willingness to use the political process as an antislavery strategy, Douglass and Smith shared a commitment to improving the lives of the northern Black community. Henry Mayer explains, "Smith had several valuable attributes for the [abolitionist] movement: sincerity, money, and a strong commitment to the welfare of black people. He supported a number of black educational and entrepreneurial ventures," and "he had given away many plots of land near North Elba in the central Adirondacks to fugitive slaves and impoverished city folk."[15] McKivigan explains that although "many of the grants had been abandoned and confiscated for unpaid taxes" by 1855, Smith was viewed as a genuine "friend to blacks."[16]

That Douglass shared an affinity with Smith's brand of pragmatic reform is clear when he invokes his former experience as a skilled laborer to defend his newly created paper's attention to racial uplift in the north. Explaining in "Stop My Paper" that he does not fear losing subscribers and having to work again with his capable hands, Douglass writes, "He who has rolled oil casks, stowed ships, sawed wood, swept chimneys, and labored at the bellows in New Bedford for a living, until his hands became hard like horns, has, we say, no dread of returning to manual labor, bringing, as he well knows it does, manly independence, sound sleep, and a good appetite."[17] Here Douglass draws on the labor movement's investment in "sturdy" masculinity over the dissipation and effete professionalism associated with the upper classes, and his pride in "honest" labor coincides with his paper's broad appeal for socioeconomic justice: "The paper has a great work to do for the slave, for the free colored people, and for all men, for its sympathies are not limited to any particular color, creed, class, or crime."[18] Benjamin Quarles is right in attributing Douglass's growing attention to class concerns partly to his journalism work: "[His] newspaper career gave him a broadened insight concerning the peculiar problems of the [Black American] . . ..His outlook after assuming editorship showed a keen awareness of the problems confronting the rank and file of [Black Americans] whose modest abilities were insufficient to bestride even the lower hurdles of color prejudice."[19] Although reliable numbers attesting to racial stratification within the skilled trades are not available, circumstantial evidence is suggestive. For instance, Stephen P. Rice attributes the lack of Black membership in mechanics' institutes to the fact that "by the 1830s, White employers and workers in the north worked to exclude free black men from practicing many of the skilled trades."[20] In discussing the work of the Manual Labor School Committee, Leslie M. Harris reports that attendees at the 1855 Black convention believed "that the racism of white workers and employers kept the majority of free blacks in low-paying, low-status occupations."[21] Without reliable opportunities for

[14] McKivigan, "The Frederick Douglass-Gerrit Smith Friendship," 216.
[15] Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York, St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 429.
[16] McKivigan, "The Frederick Douglass-Gerrit Smith Friendship," 211.
[17] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 24 July 1851.
[18] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 24 July 1851.
[19] Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1997), 96.
[20] Stephen P. Rice, *Minding the Machine: Languages of Class in Early Industrial America* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004), 55.
[21] Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003), 237.

apprenticeships and training available to Black youth in the north, Douglass took matters into his own hands and promoted a multi-racial industrial college.

It is important to note that Douglass's plan reflected his optimistic belief that working-class Whites were not inherently racist and could overcome their race prejudice. He believed that non-slaveholding Whites in the South could be educated and made to understand that enslaved labor prevented their own rise in economic status. For example, in an April 1854 speech before the antislavery convention in Cincinnati, Douglass asserts about the poor Whites of Virginia and Kentucky, "I believe it within the bounds of probability, that three millions of people in the south who own no slaves, will in time by the aid of education and enlightenment, come to see that the slaveholder's humiliation is necessary for the elevation of the slaves and themselves . . . Labor, white and black must fall or flourish together."[22] In the North, Douglass held out hope that working-class Whites might find common ground with skilled Blacks against exploitative labor practices. For example, in a May 1853 speech before the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Douglass describes how newly arrived Irish immigrants are taught race prejudice: "The Irish people, warm hearted, generous, and sympathizing with the oppressed everywhere when they stand upon their own green island, are instantly taught on arriving in this Christian country to hate and despise colored people. They are taught to believe that we eat the bread which of right belongs to them."[23] Brian Kelly points out that moments of interracial solidarity exist in the historical record of the long nineteenth century and should not be "dismissed as quaint,"[24] and, as I have shown in *Cross-Racial Class Protest in Antebellum American Literature*, White-authored sensational fiction and African American literature share numerous formal and thematic correspondences, including class sympathy that, at times, transcend racial difference. Therefore, Douglass's plan for a multi-racial industrial college is consistent with his indefatigable optimism in the early 1850s that race prejudice among working-class Whites could be *unlearned* and thereby lead to skilled employment opportunities for Black youth living in the North.

Rather than treating Douglass as merely "expedient" for merging his paper with Smith's, and rather than characterizing his plans for the industrial college as part of "an ambitious separatist agenda," both of which Mayer contends,[25] we should not be surprised that Douglass would begin advocating in February 1853 for a multi-racial industrial college, open to young men and women, for the benefit of northern Black families. Douglass, who experienced workplace racism upon reaching freedom in the north and settling in New Bedford from 1838–1844, and then moved his family to Rochester, in part, for the educational opportunities available to his children, understood the urgency of establishing industrial schools for the masses of Black youth—male and female—who did not have the means to attend the handful of colleges open to them. According to Quarles, "In 1827 there was a total of ten [Black] schools, primary and grammar, in five cities—Portland, Boston, New Haven, New York, and Philadelphia."[26] Efforts to start a manual labor college for Blacks can be traced to 1831, when White abolitionist Arthur Tappan proposed a school in New Haven, Connecticut, only to see the White townsfolk close ranks and quash it.[27] Quarles notes that Douglass had opposed "a purely [Black] college,"

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[22] Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volume 2: 1847–54*, ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven, Conn, Yale University Press, 1982), 474.
[23] Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One*, 433.
[24] Brian Kelly, *Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908–21* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2001), 4.
[25] Mayer, *All on Fire*, 432.
[26] Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 106.
[27] Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 107.

consistent with Garrison's opposition to independent Black institutions, at the national Black convention held in 1847 in Troy, New York.[28] The convention's *Proceedings* reveal that Douglass was among the seventeen nay votes as he sided with Henry Highland Garnet who at that time "did not see the necessity of Colored Colleges, because there were those to which colored youth could be admitted."[29]

We can see Douglass's emerging attention to educating and training Black youth in the short-lived American League of Colored Laborers that he helped to found in June 1850. Northern Blacks were often limited to menial positions such as porters, waiters, and domestic servants due to widespread race prejudice. In his letter to Stowe, Douglass writes, "Prejudice against the free colored people in the United States has shown itself nowhere so invincible as among mechanics."[30] Furthermore, with northern Black men and women facing increased competition for menial positions from the growing number of European immigrants, Douglass supported a means by which Black youth could acquire a skilled trade and comfortably raise a family. Although Harris notes that "the [League] seems not to have survived past [its] first organizational meeting,"[31] Douglass's newspaper coverage of its activities testifies to the importance they gave education. Their class-inflected ten-point plan states, "We recommend skillful, honorable, profitable labor to the free colored men of the United States . . ..[who] are already impressed with the importance of educating their rising youth in the sciences . . ..but science without a trade or some way of turning it to useful account, loses more than half its value. We therefore recommend that they be just as careful to educate their youth in the Arts of Agriculture, Manufacture and Commerce, as in the Sciences."[32] Although the league did not exist long enough to develop proposals like an industrial college, Douglass's appeal to Stowe to support one is consistent with his class sympathies and longstanding interest in improving the material conditions of the northern working poor.

Prior to his proposal for the industrial college, Douglass's attention to class-accented racial uplift is apparent in his repudiation of the colonization movement. He and Garrison shared a firm commitment to immediate emancipation of the enslaved,[33] but Douglass went farther by critiquing colonization as antithetical to efforts to help the native-born Black community strive and succeed in their homeland. Douglass regularly published counterarguments to colonization in his newspaper, such as on 2 December 1853: "[Emigrationists] are confounded with that despondency and despair which preclude the possibility of their working for their elevation here, with that hopeful ardor which is the life blood of the anti-slavery enterprise."[34] Despite *Uncle Tom's Cabin* concluding with the primary Black characters sailing for Liberia, a colonization ending that Stowe would later renounce, she seemed a receptive audience to the industrial college plan that Douglass presented to her in February 1853. Robert S. Levine writes, "Given Stowe's emphasis in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the need to educate America's blacks, Douglass could not help regarding her as a fellow believer in the importance of black elevation."[35]

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[28] Quarles, *Frederick Douglass*, 125.
[29] *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People, and Their Friends, Held in Troy, N.Y. on the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th October, 1847* (Troy, N.Y., Steam Press of J.C. Kneeland and Co., 1847), 9.
[30] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 December 1853.
[31] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 239.
[32] *The North Star*, 13 June 1850.
[33] Mayer, *All on Fire*, 72.
[34] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 December 1853.
[35] Robert S. Levine, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*: An Analysis of Reception," *American Literature* 64, 1, (1992): 71–93, 78. For more on Douglass's and Stowe's shared emphasis on Black elevation, see

Evidence of their shared interest in the racial uplift of the Black working class appears in Stowe's earlier writing, when she published the short story "The Two Altars," a diptych, over two weeks in June 1851 in the *New-York Evangelist*. Douglass and Griffiths would reprint Stowe's story in the first edition of *Autographs for Freedom* the following year.

The story's second act features a fugitive family from enslavement working hard and living in a modest tenement in New York City. Stowe's description of the setting highlights the values of industriousness and education that Douglass would promote in his industrial college plan: "As we push gently aside the open door, we gain sight of a small room, clean as busy hands can make it, where a neat, cheerful young [multi-racial] woman is busy at an ironing-table . . . A bright, black-eyed boy, just come in from school, with his satchel of books over his shoulder, stands cap in hand, relating to his mother how he has been at the head of his class."[36] In keeping with the Franklinian virtues of thrift and education that dominate the scene, young Henry proudly turns over his school-tickets, which teachers gave to reward outstanding academic work, to his mother for safe keeping in their lone piece of china, a teapot.

Artisan republican rhetoric imbues the introduction of the father, George, as he returns home from a long day of work, anticipating Stowe's capable and "sturdy" artisan George Harris in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "A neatly dressed colored man walked up, with his pail and white-wash brushes."[37] A skilled and highly sought-after interior painter, George has earned five dollars, an impressive sum for one day, and will be able to buy a new cap for his son and a new dress for his daughter: "'Those that's had me once—that they never want any other hand to take hold in their rooms. I s'pose it's a kiner practice I've got, and kinder natural!'"[38] The frugal and fiscally responsible family, who have no debt and splurge on delicacies like oysters only rarely, gather around the stove for tea and George recalls how the enslaver in Georgia used to hire him out and steal his hard-earned money. Just as Henry begins to read the evening prayer from the Bible, slavecatchers burst into what Stowe reminds readers is a "simple, honest, kindly home, in a moment so desolated," and return him to slavery under the Fugitive Slave Law.[39] An illustration of the sensational scene—a coarse White slavecatcher manhandles Henry and a White gentleman in a top hat reads from an affidavit, while Henry's wife and children cower in the background and the family Bible lies on the floor of the otherwise tidy tenement—appears in the English edition of *Autographs for Freedom* and ties together the diptych's thematic content for readers.[40] In the first half of the diptych, set in 1776, the humble rural abode of a White family, whose husband-father is suffering the winter at Valley Forge, is disrupted by soldiers of the Continental Army in search of supplies for the Revolutionary cause. In the second half, set in 1850, the home of the Black family is violently torn apart by slavecatchers who are willing to sacrifice good and honest men to preserve the Union. Stowe's representation of the skilled father, the domestic mother, and their school-aged children in a well-maintained tenement embodies the racial uplift that Douglass hoped to achieve for the Black community through his industrial college plan.

Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 171–74.

[36] Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Two Altars," *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston, John P. Jewett and Company, 1853), 140.

[37] Stowe, "The Two Altars," 141.

[38] Stowe, "The Two Altars,"141–42.

[39] Stowe, "The Two Altars," 145.

[40] Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Two Altars," *Autographs for Freedom* (London, Samson Low, Son and Company, 1853), 100–101.

Class Inflections in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*

While it is impossible to know how deep a class divide existed between subscribers to Garrison's *The Liberator* and subscribers to *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, it is clear from Douglass's newspaper editorials and the entries in *Autographs for Freedom* that he represented the Garrisonians as predominantly White, largely middle class, and mostly indifferent to the needs of the Black working classes. A survey of issues of the respective newspapers printed in November and December 1853—crucial months in Douglass's media blitz of Stowe to secure funding for the industrial school and in his deteriorating relationship with Garrison—reveals a stark contrast in the periodicals' class sympathies.

George M. Fredrickson argues in *The Black Image in the White Mind* that as part of their celebration of free labor over slave labor, middle-class abolitionists were largely indifferent to the plight of the multi-racial working classes in the north. "Most of the abolitionists believed that the capitalistic free-labor system of the North was healthy at the core, that its arbitrary inequalities were surface phenomena . . . and that such inequalities were not sufficiently inhibiting to negate the general proposition that everyone had a substantial opportunity for self-improvement."[41] Specifically, Fredrickson notes, "In the first issue of the *Liberator*, [Garrison] denied the existence of conflict between wealth and property, or between labor and capital, and demonstrated his faith in an industrial order held together by the benevolence of the rich and the cultivation of Protestant virtues by the poor."[42] Most of the articles and editorials in the November and December 1853 editions of Garrison's *Liberator* focus on the efforts of abolitionists, temperance reformers, and women's rights supporters—three reform movements dominated by White middle-class activists—and give scant attention to the concerns of the working classes. Throughout November and December 1853, news coverage in *The Liberator* consists foremost of reprinted articles detailing abolitionist activities and temperance conventions, singling out praise for reformers Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott, while taking jabs at newspaper editor Horace Greeley, a self-described man of the people and a contributor to both editions of *Autographs for Freedom*, for promoting outspoken women reformers like Antoinette Brown. The *Liberator* also covers women's rights conventions in cities such as Cleveland, where Garrison spoke, and conventions in Louisville, where Lucy Stone, infamous for wearing bloomers, was well received by a large audience. In the 18 November 1853 edition, Garrison reports on Douglass's speeches, celebrates the twenty-year anniversary of the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society, and advertises a series of books for the middle class; in the 25 November 1853 edition, Garrison rounds out articles about anti-slavery activities with extensive coverage of women's rights conventions. Nevertheless, articles that would appeal to working-class Black readers appear sporadically in the *Liberator*. For instance, Garrison reprints an article from the *Baldwinsville Gazette* about the high-profile "Jerry Rescue," whereby a fugitive from slavery, living and working as a cooper in upstate New York, was rescued from would-be slavecatchers. Announcements about popular amusements like a Boston phrenology museum, and news reports about shipwrecks and other tragedies, reflect how class-accented sensational news items dominated the penny press and pervaded antebellum print culture, even a newspaper with a strong middle-class orientation like the *Liberator*.

[41] George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Middletown, Conn, Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 38.
[42] Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 38, n74.

In contrast, Douglass's newspaper in November and December 1853 is marked by working-class accents, demonstrating how his editorial choices reflect his growing attention to Blacks' material conditions. Consistent with labor papers like Lippard's *Quaker City Weekly* (1848–1850) in Philadelphia, Douglass reprints articles that detail horrific workplace accidents, that call for safety reform, and that, notably, do not appear in the pages of the *Liberator* during the same months. On 25 November 1853, a reprinted article from the *Worcester Spy* describes the "terrible powder mill explosion in Spencer, Massachusetts," which killed five workers on a site that saw a fatal explosion just two years earlier.[43] "Can there be no remedy?", the exasperated writer asks.[44] On the front page of the 2 December 1853 edition, Douglass reprints the short news item "Death by Chloroform" from the *Bridgeport Standard*, which details how a machinist fell and broke his leg; when physicians prepared to set the leg and give the suffering man chloroform, "he suddenly expired."[45] The numerous articles involving fatal work-related accidents would be of special interest to Douglass's White and Black working-class readers and might evoke empathy in middle-class subscribers. While *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, like the *Liberator*, is committed foremost to covering abolitionist activities and advancing antislavery arguments, the sensational news reports involving laborers in Douglass's paper contrast with the middle-class ethos of Garrison's paper.

Further, Douglass's newspaper, which serialized his novella *The Heroic Slave* and Charles Dickens' novel *Bleak House*, is more responsive to popular, class-accented cultural expressions than the *Liberator*. Under "Musical Notices" on 18 November 1853, penned by Douglass's assistant Julia Griffiths, as indicated by the byline "J.G.", a favorable review of the Hutchinson family's performance of "Little Topsey's [sic] Song" is followed by an equally positive review of the song "Katy's Cry" that was inspired by Solon Robinson's class-inflected sketches about "Little Katy, the Hot Corn Girl," published in Greeley's *New York Tribune*. By the middle of December 1853, Robinson had expanded his serial into the full-length city-mystery novel *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York*, which features sympathetic portrayals of White and Black working-class characters who are exploited and then abandoned by White "merchant princes."[46] In the Musical Notice, Griffiths praises "Katy's Cry" for its financial support of Reverend Lewis Pease's trade school for working-class youth in New York City. Griffiths writes, "The profit, derived from the sale of this song, will be given to the admirable Institution, entitled *the Five Points House of Industry*."[47] Although the House of Industry catered primarily to the White working classes living in the racially diverse Five Points area, a *New York Times* report of 23 December 1853 on the children's Christmas production "A Five Points Opera" indicates that White and Black children performed on stage together, a rare moment of cross-racial sympathy that Douglass hoped to reproduce in a multi-racial industrial college. *Frederick Douglass' Paper* would report on the successful sales of Robinson's sensational novel *Hot Corn* throughout January 1854, yet one more indication that Douglass considered the interests of working-class readers.

Douglass's Media Blitz: Newspapers, Letters, and Committee Reports

[43] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 25 November 1853.
[44] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 25 November 1853.
[45] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 December 1853.
[46] For a fuller analysis of the working-class discourses of artisan republicanism and cross-racial sympathy in *Hot Corn*, see my article "Whiteness and Working-Class Studies," *Whiteness and American Literature*, ed. Jolene Hubbs (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2025), 266–80.
[47] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 18 November 1853.

In addition to addressing working-class concerns, *Frederick Douglass' Paper* played a key role in Douglass's media blitz of Stowe, who seemed, at least in February 1853, a reliable donor for the industrial college. The amount of money Stowe earned from the unprecedented sales of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—300,000 copies were sold between March and December 1852—was a matter of great public interest and covered regularly in the northern press. Prior to his meeting with Stowe in Andover, Douglass ran a blurb detailing the proceeds: "We learn that Mrs. Stowe received, last week, from her publishers, Messrs. Jewett & Co., of this city, the sum of $10,000, this being her second payment as copyright on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, making upwards of $20,000, received by her in nine months."[48] Given that Douglass and his associates estimated that buying the land outside of Erie and erecting the initial buildings for the industrial college would cost $50,000 (approximately $2,000,000 in 2025), Stowe's financial help was essential. The fact that Stowe was about to embark on a tour of England, where she would collect a penny offering along her route, made her a promising source of funding. Moreover, Stowe had a well-deserved reputation for using her money for the causes of abolition and racial elevation. Douglass reports on 11 February 1853 that "Mrs. Stowe has given J.P. Jewett, $25, W.B. Bradford, $10, in aid of the relief of Mr. Kauffman of Penn.," referring to the conviction of White abolitionist Daniel Kauffman of Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, for sheltering and assisting thirteen fugitives formerly enslaved in Maryland.[49] Two months later, Douglass reports on Stowe's generous support of the Edmonson sisters, two formerly enslaved young women from Maryland, to attend the Young Ladies Preparatory School at Oberlin College. Although Stowe would eventually give Douglass only a small portion of her fundraising efforts, David S. Reynolds reports that Stowe "applied the money from the British penny offerings toward funding antislavery newspapers and lectures, education for free blacks, and the purchase of several enslaved blacks to secure their freedom."[50] Douglass's faith in Stowe's initial enthusiasm for his industrial college plan was not misplaced, and he helped to remind Stowe of her promise in a series of articles in his newspaper throughout 1853.

The first mention in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* of Stowe's financial pledge to help fund an industrial college appears on 4 March 1853, in news coverage of the Liberty Party's Convention held in Syracuse: "[Frederick Douglass] had been upon a pilgrimage to Uncle Tom's Cabin, and had talked with Mrs. Stowe, who was soon to leave this country for Scotland, where she expected to receive a sum of money to invest in an educational institution for the education of the colored race."[51] The next month, on 15 April 1853, Douglass references, and thus encourages, Stowe's pledge as part of three strategically placed, interrelated articles on the industrial college plan. In "Mrs. Stowe's Visit to England," Douglass writes, "The chief good which we anticipate from Mrs. Stowe's mission, is the founding of an Institution, in which our oppressed and proscribed youth, Male and Female, may obtain a plain English education, and a practical knowledge of various useful Trades . . ..Give us education and trades, and we shall live to attend the funeral of slavery, and to see the last colonization ship rot at the wharf."[52] In an adjacent column, Douglass responds to an editorial in the *Oberlin Times* accusing the industrial

[48] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 4 February 1853.
[49] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 11 February 1853.
[50] David S. Reynolds, *Mightier Than the Sword:* Uncle Tom's Cabin *and the Battle for America* (New York, W. W. Norton, 2011), 162–63.
[51] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 4 March 1853.
[52] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 April 1853.

college plan of racial exclusivity and sets the writer straight: "The impression made by the foregoing, is that Mrs. Stowe and we are for establishing a manual labor school, 'exclusively' for colored youth; whereas, nothing of the sort is proposed . . ..it will be a school where colored youth (now shut out from all respectable trades) shall have a fair chance for making themselves master mechanics."[53] The working-class accents of these two articles are echoed in Stowe's letter, printed below Douglass's response to the *Oberlin Times*, in which she praises a Bible she received in Andover from the English working classes: "There is no class that I regard with such honest pride as I do the working class of our own free States . . ..That the working men of England should sympathize with the American slave is not wonderful. In his person honest labor is outraged and loaded with dishonor and contempt—*labor*, the only true noble thing in such a life as this, is made a badge of disgrace."[54] Whether or not Stowe was fully on board with the project at this stage is uncertain, but Douglass positions the three articles to emphasize that he and the celebrity novelist share sympathy for the multi-racial working classes.

Douglass provided his readers with regular updates about Stowe's movements and speeches in Europe that spring and summer, detailing how much money she was raising on the trip (one-thousand dollars in Scotland, for instance), and, on 27 May 1853, he reported that Stowe has "signified to [her] contributors that they should look to our columns to know what disposition is made of their donations."[55] That Stowe was uneasy with Douglass's reporting on her fundraising efforts is underscored by the fact her brother, Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, felt compelled to publish a letter in *The National Era* on 7 July 1853 to correct "an erroneous statement going around the papers that Mrs. Stowe had determined to give the proceeds of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to the education of colored people."[56] Beecher contends, "She has not set apart her whole income to [the northern Black community]. She retains the right of employing her means as her judgment may dictate."[57] Douglass biographers speculate about why Stowe turned cold toward Douglass's plan and ultimately provided him with just five-hundred thirty-five dollars for the industrial college. Quarles points to the controversy in the news that summer about how she planned to use the $20,000 she collected in Great Britain as one possible cause, and adds that Stowe may have "concluded that the school could not succeed because all the manual labor colleges she had heard of had been failures."[58] Levine surmises Stowe may have lost interest "perhaps because she thought blacks could not successfully run their own school, or perhaps because she was aware of criticisms of the project from other blacks."[59] Mayer claims that to quell the public disagreements between Douglass and Garrison in late 1853, Stowe "hint[ed] that her support for his training school depended upon a cessation of hostilities"[60]; if the mutual attacks published in the December issues of the *Liberator* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper* are any indication, those hostilities did not cease but accrued. Harris argues that the plan failed because of the lack of funds from White abolitionists and the sheer scale of the enterprise: in 1855, Black "conventioneers were overwhelmed by the seeming difficulty in providing training for different types of skilled labor for large numbers of students in an institutionalized setting."[61]

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[53] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 April 1853.
[54] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 April 1853.
[55] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 27 May 1853.
[56] *The National Era*, 7 July 1853.
[57] *The National Era*, 7 July 1853.
[58] Quarles, *Frederick Douglass*, 131.
[59] Levine, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*," 85.
[60] Mayer, *All on Fire*, 433.
[61] Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 237.

Whatever the reason for Stowe's decision not to provide the funds, and whatever precise moment Douglass realized it, Douglass sustained a media blitz of Stowe during the second half of 1853 as he tried to will the industrial college into existence.

After Stowe departed for Europe in late March 1853, Douglass and his associates went to work developing and promoting their industrial college plan. Over three days in July 1853 in Rochester, New York, Douglass's home base, Black luminaries gathered for a national convention to discuss strategies for ending chattel slavery in the south and effecting racial uplift in the north. In his opening day address, Douglass, paving the way for unveiling his industrial college plan on the third day, presents racial uplift as an antislavery strategy: "The intelligent and upright free man of color is an unanswerable argument in favor of liberty, and a killing condemnation of American slavery."[62] The head of the committee investigating the viability of an industrial college was Charles L. Reason, the son of Haitian immigrants and a mathematics wunderkind who was made an instructor in the New York City schools at the young age of fourteen. Reason, who would serve as a literature and mathematics professor at New York's Central College in 1849 and later as the principal of a manual labor school in Philadelphia, supported Douglass's efforts to merge classical and mechanical education. According to Anthony R. Mayo, "Long before manual and vocational training had been introduced in courses of public instruction, he advocated a system of education which combined the training of both mind and hand, as best calculated to promote in young people lives of usefulness, self-respect, and self-dependence."[63] Reason's report from the morning session at the convention insists on education as a means of racial empowerment, arguing that an industrial college will develop "that kind of power most essential to our elevation," and, like Douglass, calls for an institution that combines the classical study of literature with training in trades and agriculture.[64]

In his report, Reason collapses the false binary between the intellectual and the craftsman, lamenting, "Literature has too long kept itself aloof from the furrowed field, and from the dust and bustle of the work-shop. The pale, sickly brow and emaciated form have been falsely shown to the world as the ripeness of mental discipline; and sun-burnt and brawny muscular arms, have been among the majority of students synonymous with dullness of parts, and ignorant vulgarity."[65] Douglass, in his novella *The Heroic Slave*, first published in *Autographs for Freedom* and then serialized in his newspaper, similarly describes his protagonist Madison Washington: "His whole appearance betokened Herculean strength; yet there was nothing savage or forbidding in his aspect . . ..He was just the man you would choose when hardships were to be endured, or danger to be encountered,—intelligent and brave. He had the head to conceive, and the hand to execute."[66] Consistent with such defenses of the dignity of "honest" labor by Douglass and White labor reformers alike, Reason concludes with class-inflected discourse, "In the sweat of their brows, we would have our scholars grow powerful, and their sympathies run out for humanity everywhere. On the altar of labor, we would have every mother dedicate her child to the cause of freedom."[67] The report also includes a plan to educate

[62] *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, Held in Rochester, July 6th, 7th and 8th, 1853* (Rochester, N.Y., Office of *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 1853), 17.
[63] Anthony R. Mayo, "Charles Lewis Reason," *The Negro History Bulletin*, 5, 9 (1942): 212–15, 215.
[64] 30. Douglass clarifies the industrial college's balanced education in the 25 March 1854 issue of *Frederick Douglass' Paper* when he writes, "For every branch of Literature taught, there shall be one branch of handicraft also taught in the School."
[65] Mayo, "Charles Lewis Reason," 31.
[66] Frederick Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 2015), 7.
[67] *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, Held in Rochester*, 32.

the college's female students, suggesting, for instance, "that looms could be erected for the weaving of carriage and other trimmings; for bindings of various kinds."[68] Following the report, Douglass publicly read and entered into the minutes his entire letter to Stowe of 8 March 1853 in which he asserts that establishing an industrial college will deal a blow to chattel slavery and at the same time improve the material conditions of the working poor: "The slave, not less than the freeman, would be benefited by such an institution. It must be confessed that the most powerful argument now used by the Southern slaveholder, and the one most soothing to his conscience, is that derived from the low condition of the free colored people of the North."[69] Finally, during the evening session, Reason offered a resolution, which was adopted, that the industrial college would not practice "the principle of complexional exclusiveness,"[70] consistent with Douglass's appeals to the multi-racial working classes. Enthusiasm for the industrial college, fomenting in 1853, headlines the second edition of *Autographs for Freedom*, Douglass's other major editorial enterprise at the end of that year.

Autographs for Freedom and the Class Accents of Racial Uplift

Autographs for Freedom, a giftbook published in December 1852 and December 1853 as a fundraising venture by the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, features short stories, sketches, essays, and poems by notable Black and White men and women connected with the antislavery cause. The giftbook was edited by Douglass and the Society's secretary, British abolitionist Julia Griffiths who, at Douglass's request, came to Rochester and served as his editorial assistant and confidante from spring 1849 until 18 June 1855 when she returned to Europe. As the book's title indicates, each author concluded their contribution, which ranged from one to sixty-six pages, with their signature, a collector's item during the period. The modest first edition, released on 23 December 1852 so that it could be exchanged as a Christmas gift, sold for seventy-five cents for a plain bound copy and one dollar for gilt. In contrast, the second edition, released in December 1853, sold for one dollar twenty-five cents for a plain bound copy, one dollar fifty cents for gilt edges, and two dollars for full gilt sides and edges, demonstrating that it, ironically, was marketed to the same middle-class audience that its contents critique. In a recent article, John R. McKivigan and Rebecca A. Pattillo detail the giftbook's political aims, arguing that Douglass and Griffiths chose contributors strategically to widen the antislavery coalition beyond Garrison and his followers: "*Autographs*' essays endorsed voting, which Garrisonians opposed as sanctioning the nation's proslavery government, and treated the northern churches as potential antislavery allies, instead of the 'bulwark of slavery' that the Garrisonians claimed."[71] While McKivigan and Pattillo's analysis is instructive, and I agree with their characterization of Douglass and Griffiths as "tactical pragmatists," they devote little attention to the second edition and do not take up either edition's working-class accents and anxieties about the northern marketplace, what I argue constitutes another significant and, until now, largely underappreciated area of divergence between Douglass and the Garrisonians in the early 1850s.

[68] Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*
[69] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 December 1853.
[70] *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, Held in Rochester*, 46.
[71] John R. McKivigan and Rebecca A. Pattillo, "*Autographs for Freedom* and Reaching a New Abolitionist Audience," *The Journal of African American History* 102, 1 (2017): 35–51, 42.

To illustrate how Douglass and Griffiths shaped *Autographs for Freedom* to develop a critique of comfortably situated and self-satisfied middle-class abolitionists indifferent to labor reform, I provide an example of Douglass's perception of the class divide *among* abolitionists. In "The Testimonial to Mrs. Stowe, and What shall be done with it?" published in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* on 27 May 1853, Douglass responds to an editorial attacking the industrial college plan that ran earlier that month in the London *Anti-Slavery Advocate* and signed only by "an American Abolitionist." In the reprinted editorial, the "American Abolitionist" writes, "All schemes of instruction, amelioration, etc. are delusive and cruel while slavery lasts, as well talk of painting and making watertight the house while it is on fire, as combine instruction and slavery . . ..Let suffering be ameliorated, but above all let *wrong*, the cause of suffering, be *righted*."[72] In his refutation, Douglass represents the anonymous author as a Garrisonian who may be full of "thunder" for the abolitionist cause, "a great thing," but who is indifferent to the plight of the Black working classes in the north because of his own race and class privilege.[73] Douglass writes, "We venture to affirm that he is 'an American Abolitionist' with a *white* skin; for no colored man, who sets any value upon education—who is at all concerned for the welfare of his children, or that of his race generally—can think of postponing all efforts for promoting their welfare until slavery is abolished."[74] Furthermore, Douglass argues, "If free blacks must not be improved while slavery lasts, must free whites? Why must everything be done for the one, and nothing for the other? We venture to say that this preacher against instruction and amelioration lives in the utmost ease himself, and does all he can to educate his children."[75] Douglass concludes his defense of the industrial college plan by highlighting the race prejudice among abolitionists that he hopes it will address. "If anyone is surprised at our indignation, they should remember that, even among abolitionists, it is almost impossible for a Free Colored man to get his child into any respectable employment; and the doors of the workshop, as well as the gates of the college, are closed against him."[76] That Douglass believed some White middle-class abolitionists like Garrison did not devote enough attention to the needs of the Black working classes in the North is evident, as I've shown, in Douglass's newspaper writing and editorial practices. This historical context, reconstituted through an array of Black and antislavery print culture sources, illuminates the class accents of the fiction and nonfiction appearing across the two editions of *Autographs for Freedom*. Significantly, the giftbook captures Douglass and his supporters' heady excitement over the industrial college plan and registers the growing rift between the two men and their respective followers.

Numerous entries spanning the two editions of *Autographs for Freedom* critique middle-class abolitionists who exploit the multi-racial working classes, develop sympathetic portrayals of proud and "honest" Black craftsmen, and insist on economic uplift as an effective antislavery strategy. The first edition's five-page sketch "The Man-Owner," penned by the Reverend Edgar Buckingham of Cambridge, Massachusetts, aligns Southern slaveowners with Northern capitalists as indifferent to those they exploit. A Poe-inspired Gothic representation of the divided self, the sketch features a northerner who suddenly becomes a "man-owner" when he reaches adulthood and turns twenty-one, because, as it turns out, he is tormented by that part of the self—figured as an unruly servant—that is "disobedient" and beyond his conscious control.

[72] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 27 May 1853.
[73] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 27 May 1853.
[74] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 27 May 1853.
[75] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 27 May 1853.
[76] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 27 May 1853.

The northerner becoming a "man-owner" is made plausible in the sketch by his coolness toward the working classes: "Yet he did not like to associate with men lower in the social scale than himself . . . Nor did he care for, or believe in, any suggestions or plans, the object of which was the elevation of the poor as a class, and the levelling upwards of the human race."[77] The sketch's class accents draw attention to economic stratification in the north, and its closing moral ensures its commitment to the abolitionist cause: "Who will believe that any man ought to have the ownership of another, when it is so rare to find one of us wholly competent to govern and to own himself?"[78]

A direct critique of middle-class abolitionists appears in Horace Greeley's essay "The Dishonor of Labor" in the second edition of *Autographs*. Greeley begins with the claim that chattel slavery will end once people understand "that no man can really enjoy more than his own moderate daily labor would produce," a claim that would appeal to the multi-racial producing classes in the north, and he goes on to call out privileged abolitionists.[79] Greeley chastises "Every rich Abolitionist, who is ashamed of being caught by distinguished visitors while digging in his garden or plowing in the field," and "Every Abolitionist lecturer who would send a hireling two miles after a horse, whereon to ride three miles to fulfil his next appointment respectably."[80] Greeley's class-accented critique of the pretensions of the professional middle class resonates with his "Work and Wait" essay that appears in *Autographs*' first edition, in which he proffers the following advice to abolitionists: "Be preeminent in your consideration and regard for the rights and wrongs of labor in your own circle, even the rudest and humblest. An abolitionist who hires his linen made up at the lowest market rate, and pays his wash-woman in proportion, will do little good to the antislavery or any other philanthropic cause."[81] The working-class sympathy expressed in these contributions to *Autographs for Freedom* echo Douglass's own critique of Garrisonians when he promotes the industrial college plan and economic uplift in his letter to Stowe: "I have long felt that too little attention has been given, by our truest friends, in this country, to removing this stumbling block out of the way of the slave's liberation."[82] These critiques of northern labor practices would have likely resonated with the giftbook's Black readers, which Meaghan M. Fritz and Frank E. Fee, Jr. suggest were considerable based on the fact that "Douglass's black correspondents praised *Autographs* in letters published in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*."[83]

In addition to critiquing middle-class abolitionists, both editions of *Autographs for Freedom* feature short stories that use sensational plot lines, invoke artisan republican rhetoric of "honest" labor, and provide sympathetic portrayals of Black and White working-class characters. These features show that Douglass and Griffiths were responsive to the popular city-mystery novels that appealed to laborers in the northeast and dominated the literary marketplace in the early 1850s. The three longform fiction pieces across *Autographs*' two editions include Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, Stowe's "The Two Altars," and the South Carolinian and former enslaver William Henry Brisbane's "Narrative of Albert and Mary." Brisbane's tale stages

[77] Edgar Buckingham, "The Man-Owner," *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston, John P. Jewett and Company, 1853), 100.
[78] Buckingham, "The Man-Owner,"103.
[79] Horace Greeley, "The Dishonor of Labor," *Autographs for Freedom* (New York, James C. Derby, 1854), 194.
[80] Greeley, "The Dishonor of Labor," 196.
[81] Horace Greeley, "Work and Wait," *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston, John P. Jewett and Company, 1853), 79.
[82] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 December 1853.
[83] Meaghan M. Fritz and Frank E. Fee, Jr., "To Give the Gift of Freedom: Gift Books and the War on Slavery," *American Periodicals* 23, 1 (2013): 60–82, 68.

debates over chattel slavery through an unlikely meeting of the daughter of an enslaver and her fiancé, the title characters who hail from the Carolinas, and their mild-mannered pirate captors, Captain Templeton and his ship's minister Gracelius. Drawing upon tropes from sensational pirate tales published in the cheap press and weekly story papers, Brisbane's story features the steamship explosion that took place on 14 June 1838 off the coast of North Carolina, killing more than one-hundred people. After Albert and Mary are tossed overboard during a violent thunderstorm, just prior to the ship exploding and sinking, the young couple is rescued at sea by Templeton and his pirates, who prove to be the kind of oxymoronic characters that David S. Reynolds has identified in the period's politically subversive popular fiction: "One effect of yellow fiction was to break down firm moral categories by valorizing both the heroic and the villainous, both the pious and the impious."[84] The pirates are kind to the helpless couple, promising to return them to land once they raid a suitable ship: "'I know that you have been trained to believe that pirates are necessarily devoid of humane feelings, and are ever thirsting for blood. But I trust we are as hospitable and kind a people to our guests, as are to be found on land.'"[85] Albert, who disavows Christianity because his parents defend owning slaves through Scripture, as do Mary and her parents, pleads with their captors to give up piracy, at which point Templeton and Gracelius defend pirating by echoing perverse defenses of chattel slavery coming out of the South.

Brisbane, a Baptist minister from Beaufort, South Carolina, who inherited and later freed the people he enslaved after he was unable to counter arguments he read in abolitionist pamphlets, published anti-slavery tracts and sermons pseudonymously and made appeals to the White working classes in the South. According to Susanna Ashton, "Brisbane hoped to win 'upstate' or 'upcountry' South Carolina citizens over to the antislavery cause by arguing that their own best interests were to resist the political power of the class of elite enslavers and to embrace free labor."[86] In Brisbane's only known short story "Narrative of Albert and Mary," Gracelius defends the pirates through disingenuous arguments that call up Southern defenses of chattel slavery: "'Piracy itself is nothing more than the appropriating of the products of another's labor and skill, without his consent or contract. The absence of the contract, or the consent of the producer, does not alter the nature and extent of the pirates' right.'"[87] Moreover, referencing paternalistic defenses of slavery, Gracelius claims that pirates are bound to treat their victims mildly: "'Nothing more should be done than is absolutely essential to the maintenance of the peculiar institution of piracy. It is not the relation of the pirate to the producer or prisoner which is sinful, but infidelity to the solemn trust which that relation creates.'"[88] After the kind but deluded pirates fulfill their word and place the young couple on a French merchant ship, whose captain they have brutally killed, Albert and Mary return to the United States transformed by the experience. Albert becomes a Christian because he realizes Southern slaveowners pervert the Bible's true message and convinces his parents to free their enslaved. Mary becomes an abolitionist who convinces her parents to do likewise. The newlyweds commit to making their own way in the world, "never more to be dependent on the wealth of their parents,—assured as

[84] David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), 281.
[85] William Henry Brisbane, "Narrative of Albert and Mary," *Autographs for Freedom* (New York, James C. Derby, 1854), 92–93.
[86] Susanna Ashton, "Ablaze: The 1849 White Supremacist Attack on the Pendleton Post Office, *Southern Spaces*, published 2 December 2022, para. 15, Southernspaces.org..
[87] Brisbane, "Narrative of Albert and Mary," 104.
[88] Brisbane, "Narrative of Albert and Mary."

they were that all they could bestow upon them would be the product of unrequited toil."[89] The class-accented conclusion finds the newlyweds and their families "living happily in moderate circumstances, in a little town in one of the free States,—in the direct line of the 'underground railroad;' and many a poor fugitive finds a comfortable shelter in either of their humble cottages."[90] For Brisbane and other contributors to the giftbook, the extreme wealth and moral corruption of Southern slaveowners is contrasted against the "humble" and "honest" life enabled by free labor in the North.

Of course, Douglass knew that the virtues of free labor were not equally realized by Blacks in the northern workplace, and the industrial college plan opens the second edition of *Autographs for Freedom*. Penned by Reason, who at the time was the principal of the Institute for Colored Youth (later Cheyney University) in Philadelphia, "The Colored People's 'Industrial College': What Some of the Builders Have Thought" emphasizes the proposed multi-racial institution's benefits to the free Black community in the north, and reinforces its coeducational mission to prepare "every man and woman . . . to do good battle in the arena of active life."[91] Consistent with Douglass's frustration with middle-class abolitionists, the featured essay begins with a list of causes taken up by abolitionists: "the Abolition of Capital Punishment—for the Prohibition of the Liquor Traffic—for the Rights of Women, and similar reforms."[92] Notably missing, Reason asserts, is reformers' attention to the abolition of race prejudice in the northern marketplace. Reason writes, "But [the free Black man at the north] has failed to see a corresponding earnestness, according to the influence of Abolitionists in the business world, in opening the avenues of industrial labor to the proscribed youth of the land."[93] Reinforcing the industrial college's balance of classical education and skilled training, Reason anticipates how the school will produce "intelligent young laborers, competent to enrich the world with necessary products—industrious citizens, contributing their proportion to aid in the advancing civilization of the country;—self-providing artisans vindicating their people from the never-ceasing charge of a fitness for servile positions."[94] In keeping with the critique of middle-class abolitionists for condoning and participating in the exploitation of the working classes and at the same time obliquely invoking White labor advocates' troubling figuration of economic exploitation as "wages slavery," Reason concludes, "Abolitionists ought to consider it a legitimate part of their great work, to aid in such an enterprise—to abolish not only chattel servitude, *but that other kind of slavery*, which, for generation after generation, dooms an oppressed people to a condition of dependence and pauperism."[95] Reason's opening salvo to the Garrisonians, along with the numerous class-accented selections over the two editions, demonstrates that *Autographs for Freedom* served Douglass and Griffiths not only as a means of raising funds for the antislavery cause but also as a venue for expressing their conviction that economic uplift was itself an antislavery strategy that deserved the attention of the abolitionist movement.

Conclusion

In the 1850s, Douglass was uniquely positioned as a seasoned newspaper editor and an accomplished writer to represent the material concerns of the working classes, both Black and

[89] Brisbane, "Narrative of Albert and Mary," 125.
[90] Brisbane, "Narrative of Albert and Mary," 126.
[91] Charles L. Reason, "The Colored People's 'Industrial College': What Some of the Builders Have Thought," *Autographs for Freedom* (New York, James C. Derby, 1854), 15.
[92] Reason, "The Colored People's 'Industrial College,'" 13.
[93] Reason, "The Colored People's 'Industrial College.'"
[94] Reason, "The Colored People's 'Industrial College,'" 14-15.
[95] Reason, "The Colored People's 'Industrial College,'" 15—emphasis added.

White, in the north. According to Kyle A. Edwards, "During the pre-war and war years Douglass spoke out for the need to build an alliance between white workers, slaves, and abolitionists to overthrow the slave system."[96] Edwards also cautions us to remember that Douglass grew disenchanted with class radicalism and unions in the decades after the Civil War, and he expressed fear of mobbing and violence in response to working-class uprisings in France. Douglass "disparaged communism in comparison with true republicanism,"[97] and, anachronistically, continued to tout free labor ideology in the 1870s despite that class divisions were becoming entrenched in America, and upward economic mobility was becoming more elusive for the working classes. Douglass defended strikebreakers and eschewed violence on the picket line at home,[98] coming full circle by embracing Garrisonian moral suasion in the 1840s, advocating justified antislavery violence in the 1850s, and returning to nonviolent resistance in the 1870s. In the article "The Labor Question" in his newspaper *The National New Era*, Douglass writes that he would support striking workers, so long as "such results are achieved solely by moral persuasion, and neither violence nor intimidation are resorted to."[99]

Perhaps not surprisingly, after the Civil War, Douglass found himself an object of class-inflected critique from fellow Blacks. Having established himself comfortably in his fourteen-acre Cedar Hill estate in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C. in 1877, Douglass faced negative press when he was appointed that year to serve as the first Black marshal of the District of Columbia under the presidential administration of Rutherford B. Hayes. According to Blight, "Some blacks supposedly complained that Douglass was 'too-high-toned' to represent 'the mass of his people.'"[100] This latter view of Douglass as an aloof aristocrat is a far cry from the antebellum labor reformer who reveals himself a man of deep conviction about socioeconomic justice as seen in his artisan republican promotion and defense of the industrial college plan and in his prickly attacks on middle-class abolitionists willing to exploit the multi-racial working poor in the north.

Despite the changes over time to his own class status, Douglass continued to regret that the industrial college he worked so hard to establish never materialized. Douglass's disappointment in Stowe's change of heart is palpable in his 20 January 1854 editorial announcing that the plan is in jeopardy: "Our eminent and philanthropic friend, Mrs. Stowe, for reasons which she deems quite satisfactory, does not, at present, see fit to stand for these the patron of the proposed Institution."[101] Douglass would remain perplexed by Stowe's decision. In the 1892 edition of *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, Douglass explains, "After her return to this country I called again on Mrs. Stowe, and was much disappointed to learn from her that she had reconsidered her plan for the industrial school. I have never been able to see any force in the reasons for this change. It is enough, however, to say that they were sufficient for her."[102] Although the Business Committee led by Reason at the October 1855 national Black convention held in Philadelphia ultimately abandoned the industrial college plan, calling it

[96] Kyle A. Edwards, "Appendix A: Douglass and Marx on the Paris Commune and the Labor Question in the United States," in August H. Nimtz's and Kyle A. Edwards's *The Communist and the Revolutionary Liberal in the Second American Revolution: Comparing Karl Marx and Frederick Douglass in Real Time* (Boston, Mass, Brill, 2024), 317–51, 318.
[97] Edwards, "Appendix A," 329.
[98] Edwards, "Appendix A," 337.
[99] "The Labor Question," *The New National Era*, 26 October 1871.
[100] Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, 584.
[101] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 20 January 1854.
[102] Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Boston, De Wolfe & Fiske Co., 1892), 358.

"impracticable" and "inadvisable,"[103] Douglass's work resulted in a commitment from the Black business community to place advertisements in the northern press for apprenticeships available to their youth. Through their tireless efforts to start an industrial college, Douglass, Griffiths, Reason, and their allies left behind a wealth of literary output, including two editions of the underappreciated giftbook *Autographs for Freedom*, that drew attention to the plight of the multi-racial working classes in the north and promoted economic uplift of the Black community as a crucial antislavery strategy.

[103] *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, Held in Franklin Hall, Sixth Street, Below Arch, Philadelphia, October 16th, 17th and 18th, 1855* (Salem, N.J., Printed at the National Standard Office, 1856), 26–27.