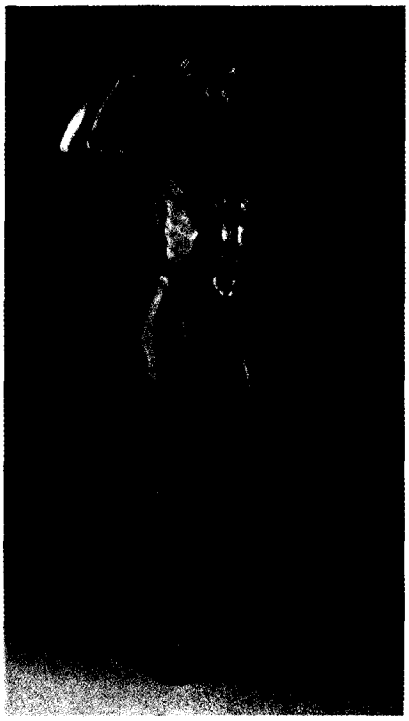
disseminated across the Western world in a wide variety of instructional contexts, even in medical schools.[17] The high-cultural understanding of the human body was, in part, an understanding of classical sculpture and its continuing tradition in the practice of modern sculpture. The phenomenon I am describing was dynamic. Natural philosophers used classical sculpture to visualize and articulate a new racial construct, but the resulting theory transformed the understanding of classical sculpture by racializing it. This had a significant impact on modern sculpture, for nineteenth-century sculptors, whether deliberately neoclassical or not, worked in the shadow of classical sculpture. They drew after plaster casts, they lifted famous poses or gestures, they strove to emulate the supposedly classical qualities of restraint and decorum. Broadly speaking, classical sculpture still served as the benchmark of the sculptural and thereby defined what was not sculpture—most fundamentally, the body of the "Negro," the black antithesis of classical whiteness.

For the most part, then, the black body was relegated instead to the "lower" realm of representation reserved for it in Nott and Gliddon's illustration, the media of graphic illustration and popular caricature. In the early nineteenth century, African Americans or their mimics became much more visible in these media. In political cartoons, songbook covers, and illustrations of blackface performance, the ragged "darky" of the plantation and the uppity "coon" of the city became stock figures. These stereotypical black bodies—whether they represented black Americans or whites masquerading as such—were still conceived and pictured as the grotesque inversion of what Bakhtin called the "classical" or "canonical" body.[18] The canonical body, in his formulation, is a closed contour, without holes or protrusions; this conforms to the ideal figure in sculpture, which sculptors would often say could be rolled downhill without breaking (a principle honored in the breach, as the extended arm of the Apollo Belevedere demonstrates). By contrast, the grotesque body is characterized by swaying contours, wildly scattered limbs, protruding buttocks, spread-eagle legs, all devices that break the erect, contained profile of the canonical body. One of the best illustrations of the canonical/grotesque polarity in popular culture comes from the world of minstrelsy, where a sheet music cover of the 1840s contrasts the ideal body language of the standing white gentlemen with the comic motions of their seated blackface impersonations (fig. 1.3). The principle of opposition used here is very similar to the principle operating in the "scientific" illustration, where the vertical profile of the canonical face is contrasted with the supposedly jutting jaw of the more animal-like Negro. The body codes distinguishing the two types can be traced as far back as ancient theater, where the comically swaying bodies of slave characters were contrasted with the erect postures of the hero.[19]

1.3 Sheet music cover for *Songs of the Virginia Serenaders* (Boston, 1844).

This connection between the caricatured black body and the slave types of ancient theater is a reminder that race alone does not account for the peculiar status of African Americans in American sculpture. The point becomes clearer if we compare the representation of African with native Americans. Although racial thought demoted both groups to inferior status, the two "races" played very different roles in science as well as sculpture. The cranial measurements Nott and Gliddon relied upon to document racial difference showed little difference in size between Ameri-



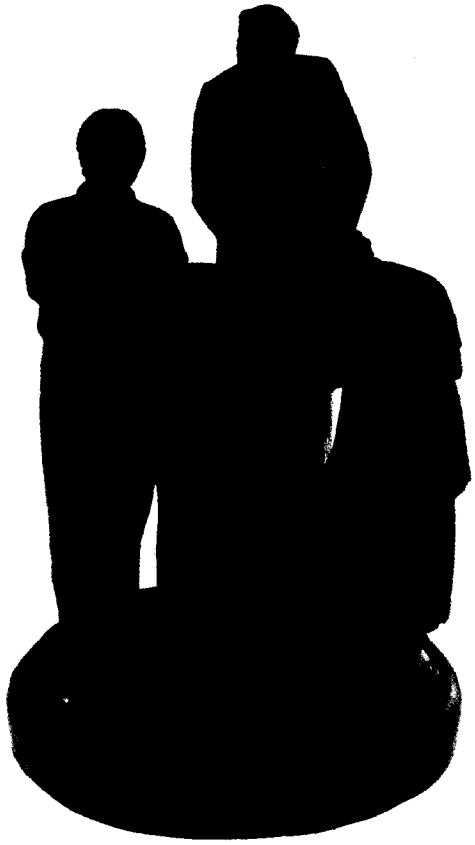
1.4 Henry Kirke Brown, *Choosing of the Arrow*, 1849, bronze statuette.

can Indian skulls and African or African American skulls, yet it is consistently the "Negro" who appears in the text as the definitive sign of racial inferiority and thereby the standard of comparison for the white man.[20] In antebellum sculpture, while the figure of the Negro almost never appeared, the figure of the Indian appeared regularly, and often in classicizing pose or appearance. When sculptor Henry Kirke Brown in 1849 modeled a small bronze figure of an Indian with an arrow, he based it on the pose of the Apollo Belvedere (fig. 1.4).[21] Nor was the Indian confined to the darker material of bronze; Indian figures appeared repeatedly even in white marble, despite all its associations of purity and antiquity. Thus the opposition of "lower" race and the classic did not apply evenly across racial types. Both the native American and the African American were marginalized but their social histories, and their representations in culture were quite different. The dividing line between them, of course, was slavery. The African American body was indelibly scarred by it, whether literally by the whip or figuratively by a racist culture that specifically singled out African bodies for enslavement.[22] Sculpture in the classical tradition was devoted to the human body in its most noble and divine form. The body, in effect, was a metaphor for mastery, and slavery was

the very antithesis of that ideal. This is why the Indian, though marginalized by civilized society, still had an ideal dimension. He could be represented as courageous and independent, a symbol of a vanished or vanishing American antiquity. The Negro as slave functioned more readily and more evenly as a sign of lack—lack of power, lack of decorum, lack of self-restraint, lack of humanity.[23]

Orlando Patterson's comparative study *Slavery and Social Death* usefully conceptualizes the slave as a liminal figure, poised on the boundary between society and chaos, between man and animal. The situation of the "Negro" in Nott and Gliddon's image perfectly illustrates this liminal status. The subject of slavery actually permeates their text and especially the anecdotal examples they use to buttress their cranial "data," so it is not surprising that his opposition of white and black stands equally well for the opposition of mastery and slavery. It is important to remember, however, that Patterson's idea is a theoretical schema, in a sense conceptualizing the master's point of view—which is why the comparison with Apollo could so well illustrate it.[24] In the varied textures of their actual existence slaves were not liminal; they were fully human of course and also part of society, important members of the master's household or of the overall plantation community. Patterson's theoretical schema perhaps helps account better for the representation of slavery than for its lived reality.[25]

The reason, then, that African Americans loomed as the unspeakable reality that sculpture barely dared to approach was not so much that slavery was politically divisive, even though "politics" in this partisan sense was certainly a factor.[26] The deeper reason is that the age-old status of the slave combined with the newer concept of race created an extremely powerful cultural formation that rendered the African American virtually the embodiment of what was *not* classically sculptural. In antebellum America, black slaves could sometimes be *imagined* as sculpture—for example, in Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Dred*, where she introduced the hero as "a tall black man, of magnificent stature and proportions" whose "skin was intensely black, and polished like marble."[27] Even more directly, in an essay on Sojourner Truth, Stowe likened the ex-slave to the *Negro Woman at a Fountain*, a now lost statuette executed in the 1840s by Charles Cumberworth, who was active in France and England.[28] In both cases she was describing escaped or fugitive slaves, heroic figures who had broken the bonds of the system that debased them. They were heroes insofar as they refused to allow slavery to define them, and the appeal to sculptural metaphors to describe them simply confirmed that heroism. But these remained metaphors, rather than actual works of sculpture: it was inflammatory enough merely to describe a figure like Dred, but far more so to make the figure into marble



1.5 John Rogers, *Slave Auction*, 1859, plaster.

or bronze where it would stand, legitimated by all the weight of classical sculptural tradition, as an incarnation of black humanity. Simply to represent black slaves in sculpture was in a sense to emancipate them.[29]

Before 1860 there are no known images whatsoever of African Americans, slave or free, in marble or bronze, the more permanent and prestigious materials of the sculptor's art. Portraits of African Americans did appear in simplified linear form on slate gravestones dating to the eighteenth century; three such images of slaves or servants exist in the African American section of Newport, Rhode Island's Common Burying Ground, and there may possibly be other examples in cemeteries that have not come to light.[30] One much better known work has survived in the form of a small-scale plaster, about twelve inches high. This is John Rogers's *Slave Auction* of 1859 (fig. 1.5).[31] The piece demonstrates well how sculptors could use an essentially colorless medium to represent racial "color." Since sculpture was understood then to be monochromatic,

sculptors could not represent skin color directly. But skin color was by no means a straightforward or consistent marker of racial identity; it was (and still is) shorthand for a whole array of racial characteristics encompassing face and hair, which the sculptor could exploit to the fullest. Thus in Rogers's work, the "black" man is identified not only by his position in front of the auctioneer's stand, but by the full lips and the compact curled hair. He stands erect, unbound and unchained, his trouser legs insistently vertical, his arms crossed defiantly, while separated from him by the auctioneer's stand is the softer, curvilinear grouping of mother and children, the mother characterized by conspicuously "whiter" hair and physiognomy. Like Stowe's Dred, the male figure embodies the idea of resistance, belying through the language of his body the debasement implied by the auctioneer's action; Rogers remarked about his model that "he would be a capital fellow in a Harpers ferry insurrection." The artist never intended the work for monumental sculpture. The piece belonged to a "lower" genre, that of the small-scale "image" as it was called, cheap desktop-scale works in plaster that were usually sold by Italian artisans who carried them around on trays from door to door. Rogers decided to have his hawked on the streets of New York by a "good looking negro" instead of an Italian, and by doing so the work attracted the attention of some local abolitionist newspapers and acquired a limited public reputation.[32]

Before the war one sculptor did expend a great deal of time and effort trying to introduce the figure of the slave into "high" sculpture in public space. This was Henry Kirke Brown, the modeler of Indians; his repeated efforts in the 1850s form the subject of chapter 2. Not until the 1870s did black slaves begin to appear on major public monuments in the United States. The sudden and unforeseen destruction of slavery brought about by the Civil War made this change possible, but it did not suddenly erase the dilemma slavery posed for sculpture. African Americans could not simply be included in sculpture once slavery ended; the very enterprise of sculpture would have to be reconstructed to make room for them and their history. The challenge facing sculpture paralleled the challenge facing society after the Civil War. Four million newly emancipated slaves could not just be absorbed into the preexisting fabric of society and culture: the fabric itself had to change. Yet in the immediate aftermath of the war, even that seemed possible. A new nation was born, and with it the promise of a new interracial order that would bury slavery forever. It was a time when the likes of William Dean Howells, writing in 1866, could actually suggest that the heroic image of an escaped slave be enshrined as a war memorial in the small towns of the nation's heartland.[33]

During this extraordinary moment in American history, the moment of "Reconstruction," many of America's most important sculptors did try to overcome the drag of accumulated tradition and fashion an interracial

order in sculpture. Their efforts to bring the African American body into public sculpture largely failed. Most of their designs were never erected in public space, and today survive only as photographs or written descriptions buried in archives. Some designs, however, were seriously considered and even heavily publicized. One was erected prominently, at the close of Reconstruction: Thomas Ball's notorious image of Lincoln standing above a freed slave, adopted for the Freedmen's Memorial to Lincoln in Washington, D.C., of 1876 (fig. 4.1) and later for a replica in Boston. In this bizarre monument to emancipation, the black man enters sculpture only to reencode the racial hierarchy established in "scientific" illustration. Kneeling on the ground, the African American once again becomes the foil by which we measure the superiority of the white deity above him. But if this outcome seems predictable, the decade-long process of experimentation that preceded it is surprising. As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, the proliferation of monumental schemes commemorating the end of slavery not only reveals a time of great sculptural ferment but also illuminates the larger cultural contest in which monumental sculpture played a key part. If the theme of black slavery and its abolition could not enter sculpture without sculpture's reconstruction, that theme could not enter monumental sculpture without reconstructing the very image of the people.

During these critical years following the war, emancipation became the single most important commemorative subject. But sculptors struggling to represent emancipation in public monuments were out on the cultural forefront, working to visualize what was still unfolding, still unwritten. They were coming to grips with a new social paradigm that seemed clearly defined in principle but was yet to be absorbed into the hearts and minds of the national citizenry. Their task was profoundly paradoxical, at once conservative and progressive. They were charged with conserving the memory of something that had not yet taken form, that might never take form. Meanwhile the ex-Confederates were engaged in an opposite, though equally paradoxical, quest. As we will see in chapter 5, they were trying to commemorate their slaveholding secession without commemorating slavery, as if their whole war had had nothing to do with it. If the winners were trying to rewrite the future into the past, the losers were trying to rewrite the past in order to change their future.

Out of all this ferment, sculpture and its image of the people were both ultimately reconstructed, but not in the way the politics of Reconstruction demanded or in the way critics like William Dean Howells envisaged. As I argue in chapter 6, the destruction of slavery bore fruit not in a genuine liberation of the black body but in a transformation of the *white* hero and the *white* body. It was the very failure to create a real interracial order in sculpture that enabled the rise of new forms of public sculpture

commemorating Anglo-American heroism. A whole new type of public monument emerged dedicated for the first time not to the illustrious hero but to the ordinary white man, the generic citizen-soldier who had fought in the war on both sides (see figs. 6.1–6.2). This redefined what commemoration was all about and what war memorials were meant to be. In 1866 Howells had proposed that the memorials of the war should be about emancipation; within a few years it was taken for granted that they were about soldiers—common white soldiers. While emancipation came to be inscribed not on the bodies of African Americans but on the body of Abraham Lincoln, so the moral imperatives of citizenship came to be inscribed on the bodies of white soldiers—profoundly reshaping the image of the soldier and the nation in the process.

The emergence of the common-soldier monument is part and parcel of the very process that has redefined race by making it the special property of minorities. To understand the far-reaching changes in nineteenth-century public monuments we must, in a sense, undo that process. We must no longer accept the standard histories of public sculpture in the United States that leave the issue of its racial content to the margins, to works like Ball's Emancipation Monument. The standard histories so completely accept the racial content of mainstream sculpture that they do not even see it. The history of the Emancipation Monument is indeed important—and it has never been properly told—but that history cannot be completed without the much larger story of how public sculpture itself failed to be emancipated.

To write this history, we must recognize, along with other recent scholars, that whiteness is itself a racial category. Whiteness, in Cornel West's words, is "parasitic" on blackness: the ruling category is unnecessary, even meaningless, without its negative counterpart.[34] Decades ago, Winthrop Jordan in his landmark study *White over Black* demonstrated how English colonists did not arrive in the New World as "white"; they gradually adopted this term to separate themselves from the "blackness" they had imported in the form of African slaves. More recently, David Roediger and Noel Ignatiev have examined the process by which nineteenth-century Irish immigrants overcame their identification with oppressed blacks and learned instead to be "white."[35] My study confirms that in the public sphere the creation and recreation of whiteness is inseparable from the creation and recreation of blackness. The marginalization of African America went hand in hand with the reconstruction of white America. African Americans could not be included *or* excluded in the landscape of public sculpture without changing the fabric of commemoration itself, without ultimately changing the face of the nation.

The story of the marginalized cannot therefore be understood without rewriting the history of what became dominant. This is why the current

literature that seeks to document exclusion—from public art, public sculpture—does not go far enough.[36] The recognition of the racist power relations that drive such exclusions is a necessary first step. But that recognition does not amount to an analysis of the racial formation of dominant culture. If the subject of race teaches us anything, it must teach us to revise the history of what is *included* in the dominant culture. Recent books such as Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* or Eric Sundquist's *To Wake the Nations* have put the issues of slavery and race at the heart of our national literature. It is high time that we do so with those forms of public art that have done so much to define the mission of the nation and the identity of its heroes.

A STUDY of this sort requires travel down many byroads, into military history, slave economies, art criticism, race relations, local politics, and so on. The documentary material I draw on is equally varied, offering information not only on artists but on the myriad cast of characters involved in public commemoration—politicians, ministers, intellectuals, veterans, activists of all kinds. If the nets of my investigation are spread wide, the results are nevertheless focused on the art forms of commemoration in the public sphere. By and large, these forms were sculpture—a medium with its own rules, idiosyncrasies, and possibilities. My working method therefore includes some detailed discussions of the medium and a few extended readings of particular works. Ultimately, the historical investigations of this book are successful only if they yield a new visual understanding of those concrete forms. It is my hope that, having gone through this process of historical and visual analysis, the reader will look with new eyes at the commemorative landscape that surrounds us and embodies our collective purpose.