by slavery and its characteristic signifiers; new identities await them as they lift their thanks to God. Even their racial characteristics are mutable, as the Africanized physiognomy of the man is counterbalanced by the flowing hair of the woman, who might "pass" for white. Lewis's chief patrons were white abolitionists, and she originally intended the work as a tribute to Boston abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Her group seemed to remain little known outside the Boston abolitionist circle. It was after all a private work, for a single patron, never reproduced as far we know and never shown in a major exhibition for another century.[33] Its marble medium and generalized modeling aligned it with an old-fashioned style that was beginning to be superseded by Ward among others.

By contrast, Ward's figure—despite its smaller scale and its apparently dated narrative—acquired a public reputation that lasted for several years. In the mid-1860s critics argued that it should reach the largest possible audience: Jarves suggested enlarging the piece for the Capitol building, while Henry Tuckerman advised that it be reproduced small-scale in a cheap material so that it would "be seen and possessed by the great mass of the people."[34] Howells in the essay "Question of Monuments" (1866) also envisaged a wide distribution. He called the *Freedman* a "sublime parable . . . the full expression of one idea that should be commemorated." The *Freedman* was the only piece of sculpture Howells mentioned in the essay, and he recommended it specifically as a prototype for a new kind of war memorial that "would better celebrate the great deeds of our soldiers" than the traditional martial images of battle heroes."[35] Both Howells and Jarves transformed Ward's open-ended piece into a commemorative artifact: the liminal figure becomes a finished "parable," bringing suitable closure to the long historical episode of slavery. Yet Ward's piece does not commemorate in this way, nor did he intend it to. Instead of fixing the meaning of the past, it raises questions about the future; in this narrative the black man's struggle is beginning, not ending.

The *Freedman* posed a series of questions about the fate of the black body, in sculpture and society. The task of public sculpture was to supply answers, not questions. Not surprisingly, Ward's figure never became public sculpture, never even found a private patron to enlarge it to life size. Writing in 1894, art critic Charles de Kay could still claim that the piece was Ward's "strongest work" while lamenting that "race prejudices" had consigned it to oblivion.[36] The piece did still have some life in popular culture. It appeared in 1890 as a print, without credit to Ward and under the title *Unshackled*, in the landmark history of black troops in American wars, *The Black Phalanx*.[37] Yet Ward himself never returned to the subject of the black male body, and only once again, in 1891, did

he execute an African American figure, a black girl who serves as a subsidiary figure in a monument to abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher. The *Freedman* remained, in many senses, a singular achievement.

EMANCIPATION, as we have seen, was not a historical event that could be tidily defined, demarcated, and commemorated. Even after the final abolition of slavery in 1865, the bitter struggle over the meaning of freedom and how it translated into social and political rights continued to intensify. Herein lay the basic dilemma for all sculptors who would face the problem of representing emancipation in public monuments. The subject defied the sort of historical closure they were asked to deliver. The public sculptor's task was not comparable to the printmaker's or even the painter's. Their images did not have to endure in public space, and so they had more license to represent the passions of the moment. But the public monument's terrifying finality put the sculptors of emancipation in a distinctly problematic position. They were testing the limits of what was culturally possible before anyone had a clear idea of what those cultural limits were.

Therefore, the theme of emancipation did not enter public sculpture as a subject in its own right. It entered public sculpture through the commemorative subject of Abraham Lincoln, as a means of locating—and "closing"—his unique historical achievement. In virtually all the numerous projects to build monuments to Lincoln in the 1860s and 1870s, emancipation figured in one form or another. As a sculptural theme, emancipation is simplified but obviously diminished once it becomes inseparable from the historical figure of Lincoln. Making Lincoln the primary historical agent tends to trivialize the role of slaves and other African Americans in bringing about their own liberation; a complex social phenomenon is shrunk to fit a great-man (and specifically great-white-man) model of history. The temporal horizon of emancipation is similarly shrunk to fit into a completed past that can be sealed off for commemoration. Such shrinkages are part and parcel of the business of commemoration, and they held true not only in white-sponsored monuments but even in some African American rituals as well. African Americans in Norfolk, Virginia, for example, celebrated their emancipation on the anniversary of Lincoln's proclamation taking effect (January 1) even though the proclamation actually had had no effect on slaves there, because the city was in Union hands and thus exempt.[38] The impulse to commemorate dates and heroes defined by the orthodox narrative histories of the dominant culture remained strong, even when those definitions worked to marginalize the very people doing the commemoration.

Yet within this reductive framework there was still room for sculptors to stretch the subject of emancipation into important new represen-

tational territory. In fact, insofar as sculptors chose to bring the black body into the representation at all they were in novel territory. The introduction of the black body into public sculpture, even within the limiting framework of a monument to Lincoln, raised some of those open questions about emancipation and society that commemorative monuments were supposed to suppress. The universe of possibilities suggested by the *Freedman*, while obviously shrunk by the commemorative subject of Lincoln, did not disappear altogether.

To grasp this point we need a few remarks about the public monument as a sculptural genre, with its constraints as well as its possibilities. In the nineteenth century monuments were expected to double as high art and popular expression. They were usually thought of as architectural landmarks, and so they were often envisaged and described with terms such as shaft, pile, and column. What is curious, though, is that Americans as often as not turned to sculptors to design monuments, even when the commemorative work was couched in terms frankly architectural. The sponsors of the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, Illinois, in their fund-raising appeals anticipated a grand "Memorial Structure," a "mighty shaft," yet they chose the design of sculptor Larkin Mead, who did give them an obelisk but surrounded it with several large groups of bronze statuary.[39] Sculpture was essential because it transformed the landmark into a meaningful object. History, the stuff of commemoration, was taken to be a chronicle of great acts performed by great human actors, and the sculptor's task was to recreate those actors in stone or metal. In a rather literal way, preserving the memory of a hero meant preserving his image for posterity. In the comportment of his body and the lines of his face, the traces of his moral example and achievement were thought to be readable. Hence Charles Eliot Norton in his 1865 essay on monuments asserted the primacy of sculpture, particularly portrait statuary, and argued that almost all the major architectural types of monuments were really vehicles for it. And Howells, while proposing less orthodox monumental types such as parks or town halls, still believed that they had to include "some significant piece of statuary" to be properly commemorative.[40] The canonical examples of monuments often cited by critics were those that combined grandeur of site and mass with significant sculpture, like Rauch's monument to Frederick the Great in Berlin or the Edinburgh monument to Sir Walter Scott.

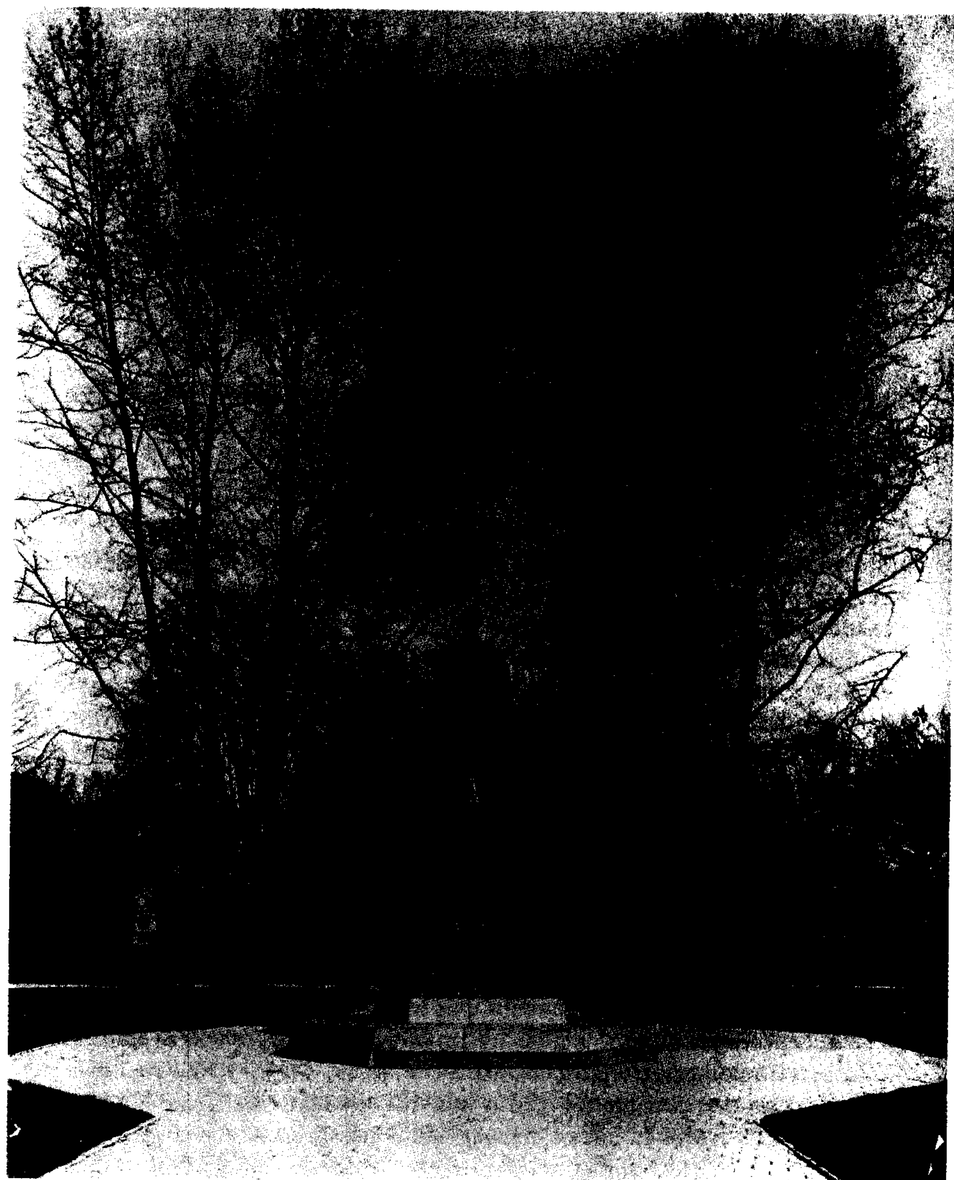
Though sculpture was considered essential to both the artistic and the expressive aims of the monument, its possibilities were nevertheless highly restricted. Meaning had to be compressed into a narrow compass: the language of pose, gesture, expression, attributes, and accessories. When faced with the task of representing the significance of complex

events, sculptors tended to condense expression into a few standard sculptural formulas. Consider the rather elaborate explanation offered by Henry Kirke Brown for his simple figure of Lincoln, cloaked and holding a scroll [fig. 3.6]:

> In any view of the late rebellion the Southern interest in human slavery was its foundation and its motive power and, in consequence, the destruction of that institution by the President's proclamation was the final blow to it, and the basis upon which the war was closed. It has therefore appeared to me proper to represent the late President unfolding the sublime purpose of emancipation to the people—symbolized by the scroll he holds in his hands—upon which may be engraved the body of the proclamation and the finger of his right hand pointing to those ever living words "forever free." I have introduced as accessories two wreaths, indicating the army and the navy, and also the arms of the United States, as identifying his acts with the country. On the reverse side of the monument may be represented the arms of the City of Brooklyn.[41]

Brown does not have to justify the standing pose, which identifies Lincoln as a man of action, or the surrounding cloak, which adds a hint of classical drapery as well as mass to the body; these are the long familiar generic devices of portrait sculpture, and they were especially appropriate here because Lincoln's figure was thought to be ungainly and intrinsically unsculptural. Instead Brown begins with a sweeping (and acute) analysis of the historical significance of the war and then condenses that lesson into a simple sculptural device, the scroll in Lincoln's left hand highlighted by the pointing gesture in his right. Reading the monument to grasp Brown's lesson, we must move from the general meaning of the heroic body to the specific meaning of the scroll and finally to the decorative accessories on the pedestal that connect those meanings to the nation and to the locality sponsoring the monument. Though Brown frowned on abstract devices such as allegories, his hierarchical procedure for conveying complex historical lessons in a few simple steps was in all respects exemplary.

The repertoire of signifying devices in portrait sculpture was so limited that certain solutions were continually recycled. Thus virtually all the Lincoln statues erected in the 1860s and 1870s—standing figure holding scroll, seated figure in act of writing—had precedents in one previous sculptural subject, the figure of George Washington.[42] While critics seemed to demand the clarity and conventionality of such sculptural language, they also deplored its repetitious banality. Norton believed that very few sculptors had the talent to carry off portrait sculpture successfully, and Howells found the typical sculptural solutions so impoverished that he could cite only the example of the *Freedman* as an alternative. The basic problem was how to make the subject of contemporary



3.6 Henry Kirke Brown, Lincoln Monument, 1869, Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

man convincingly sculptural, especially when he no longer looked or dressed like the canonical models of the body from antiquity. For sculptors and critics Lincoln was the very exemplar of this disparity: his figure was too tall and bony, his physiognomy cragged, his clothing a shambles. Summing up the standard opinions, critic Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer wrote that "in physical structure and attire he might have seemed almost the embodiment of the sculpturally impossible."[43] How was a sculptor to produce anything eloquent from such intractable material?

For some sculptors and some critics, the black body held that promise of eloquence. Like Lincoln the black man was not canonical, but unlike Lincoln his contemporary likeness was not yet fixed, his identity not yet defined by conventional types of pose and gesture and attribute. In its very indeterminacy the black body was liberating. It opened up possibilities for commemorative sculpture that the figure of Lincoln alone could not contain, which explains why the conventional single-figure formula for Lincoln justified so cogently by Brown failed to satisfy many sculptors, including Brown himself.

The aesthetic problems of commemorative sculpture cannot be separated from the more obviously political pressures inherent in this public medium. The dividing line between the aesthetic and the political is in fact difficult to define since the generic characteristics of heroic sculpture themselves carry profoundly political significance. The whole notion of history as a tale of great men is made palpably glorious in the statues of heroes; that glory works to marginalize cultural constructions of the past that might represent other groups and other categories of historical experience. The intertwining of heroic history and heroic sculpture is precisely what Brown took for granted in his discussion of the Brooklyn statue. The choice of Lincoln as the commemorative focus, and the representation of him as a heroic body, rested on presuppositions which were so self-evident that they surely did not strike the sculptor as politically charged. But within that undisputed framework important political dilemmas still arose and intruded into the consciousness of the public sculptor, all the more so because the sculptor, unlike say a writer of history, had to secure the approval of a commissioning body and the public it claimed to represent.

Nowhere was this more true than in the field of monuments to Lincoln. After his death dozens of monument associations formed in cities across the country and competed with one another for funds and legitimacy. In addition to the local associations, there were at least four groups going by the name of National Lincoln Monument Association or Lincoln National Monument Association, all vying in public to stake out this preeminent commemorative territory.[44] This outbreak of commemorative fever was unprecedented in American history. Certainly nothing comparable

had taken place after the Revolutionary War or after Washington's death. There was of course an extraordinary confluence of events that helps account for this: the first presidential assassination in the United States, coming right on the heels of a traumatic civil war—the bloodiest war in American history before or since. The monument campaigns of 1865–66 cast their scope over the whole historical panorama; they sought to commemorate not simply the figure of Lincoln but the era he helped to define.[45] In effect they sought to give some shape to the incredible events of the previous years, which had changed the destiny of the nation and the personal lives of everyone in it. But in the process of seeking closure through commemoration they opened up questions about the present. The various associations and the sculptors vying for their commissions were forced to imagine, articulate, and embody a Lincoln for the post-Lincoln nation—a historical founder for what the new nation had come to be, or was in the process of becoming.

For sculptors thrust into this momentous task, the subject of the emancipated, or emancipating, black body held enormous promise on both aesthetic and political fronts. It offered a means at once of transcending the formulaic solutions of portrait sculpture and of connecting Lincoln's presidency with the new order apparently dawning in Reconstruction. Yet the subject held risks that were equally impressive. Against the strong tradition of dehumanizing representation in both popular and scientific media, the sculptors of emancipation threatened to legitimize the black body. Making the African American body a monumental subject would alter its marginality, would make African Americans newly visible and historically significant in the physical and cultural landscape. What was at stake fundamentally was the notion of an interracial monument. Such a monument was bound to be read not simply as an image of Lincoln's historical achievement but as a representation—literally a personification—of the new interracial order emerging after slavery.

THE first interracial monument dealing with emancipation actually appeared just on the eve of the war, as the national election campaign got into swing. This was a marble relief panel located in a cemetery in Pittsburgh on the tomb of Charles Avery, a wealthy industrialist who was also famous as a philanthropist dedicated to antislavery causes (figs. 3.7, 3.8]. The panel is the first known instance of African American representation in marble or bronze. Designed by an obscure New York sculptor, Louis Verhaegan, for a town that was hardly a cultural center, the work was easy to miss. Although it was described effusively in the black newspaper *Christian Recorder* in 1869, the monument soon enough fell into oblivion.[46] Cemetery monuments, in general, occupied a marginal zone; Norton, for example, specifically excluded them from the category of the

3.7–8 Louis Verhaegen, Charles Avery Monument, 1860, Allegheny Cemetery, Pittsburgh.
Below: Detail of relief panel.

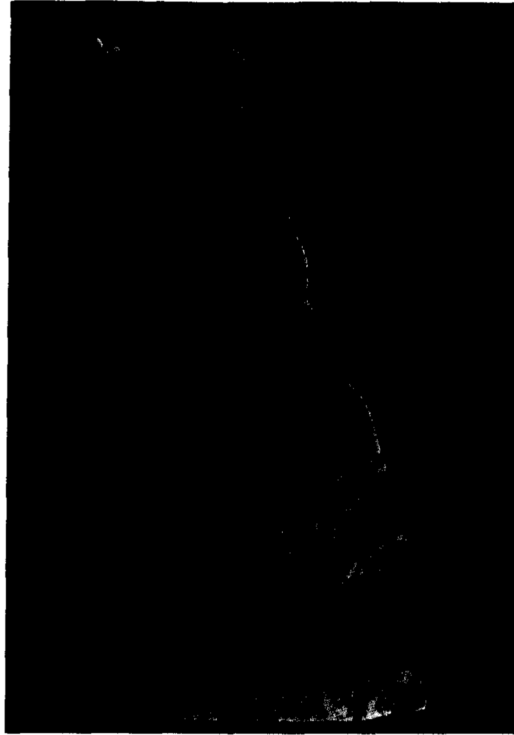
public because they were usually sponsored by families for themselves. Avery's tomb was not a family affair, but the project of several important Pennsylvania Republicans who obviously intended to make a public statement. They lavished money on the project even though Avery himself had explicitly requested a modest burial, and by locating the tomb in the most prominent site of Pittsburgh's fashionable garden cemetery they created what was probably the first public monument in the region. The marble panel on the front of the pedestal has long been severely mutilated, but the early description and photographs indicate that in its original state the figure of Avery orchestrated an emancipation narrative. Avery had founded a black school in Pittsburgh and supported black missionary work in Africa. Consequently the panel represents a series of black figures changing from nude to clothed, downcast to upright; they are progressing from an abject state of slavery through education to the role of African missionary. Avery culminates the narrative, waving a Bible in one hand and pointing with the other to a ship that will take the black missionaries under his wing to Africa. It is a narrative of uplift from slavery achieved by white benefactors and Christian education, a narrative whose ultimate end was the uplift of Africa itself. On the great political question of abolition, the panel offered no obvious answer; certainly it could be read as abolitionist but it could just as easily be interpreted instead as a plug for colonization, the scheme advanced by Lincoln among others for the deportation of American blacks to Africa.[47] The panel seems to have been designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of conservative and radical antislavery viewpoints, precisely the coalition which the Republican Party was trying to put together for the 1860 election.

Although there is no reason to think that the Avery Monument was known to sculptors outside Pittsburgh, it prefigured the earliest efforts to find a sculptural solution to the postwar problem of Lincoln and emancipation. Like the Avery panel, these early solutions transformed the idea of emancipation into a personalized narrative of racial uplift orchestrated by the white hero. One simple image recurred often. This was the image of Lincoln standing above, and lifting or blessing, a crouching black figure below. When asked in 1866 to propose a design for a Lincoln monument in Philadelphia, John Rogers, the sculptor of small-scale genre groups, replied that "the design that strikes me without having had time to think of it much, would be to represent [Lincoln] as just risen from writing, and as receiving with one hand a petition from a crouching negro, whom he is raising with the other."[48] It is interesting that this was Rogers's first instinct, as if the image sprang from the most deeply ingrained assumptions about race and slavery. Of course by this time such images had already materialized and were circulating in popular prints, issued by Currier and Ives among others (fig. 3.2) Sculptors with more

time to think and work on the problem also arrived at the same two-figure solution. Henry Kirke Brown, Randolph Rogers, and Thomas Ball all went so far as to produce models that were considered seriously by monument committees; as we shall see, only Ball's was ever erected.

The kneeling or crouching black slave refers us back once again to the abolitionist emblem, "Am I not a man and a brother?" We have already discussed the physical abasement of the figure, his contact with the ground. But the pose also establishes a peculiar relationship with the audience consuming the image and repeating its rhetorical question: the audience becomes the imaginary object of the slave's petition, the potential intercessor standing to receive the pleadings of the lowly. It is not much of a leap to materialize this unseen intercessor in the figure of Lincoln, thereby completing the image and bringing its narrative to closure. Yet that act of completion has enormous consequences for the representation of emancipation.

Consider the model proposed in 1866 or 1867 by Brown for a Lincoln monument in New York. The only surviving photograph shows a standing Lincoln pointing to heaven with his right hand and gesturing with his left toward a partially nude black male who kneels at his feet (fig. 3.9).[49] Lincoln looks down with a kindly gaze while the freed slave, his hands clasped over one knee in gratitude, looks back up. The upward tilt of his head exaggerates the receding slope of his forehead and thereby calls to mind the notorious facial angle used by racial theorists to measure intellectual inferiority. (In the abolitionist emblem this effect was avoided, whether intentionally or not.) Brown's kneeling figure seems oddly out of scale, only about two-thirds of Lincoln's height if imagined at full extension. Too small to be a man, too muscular to be a mere boy, he perhaps reads as an adolescent. He is barefoot, shirtless, slung with a canteen and some indeterminate drapery; his outfit seems intended to suggest the condition of a young "contraband," perhaps already in the unofficial service of the Union army. Whatever the precise status of the slave figure, Brown has rendered him less "manly" than Ward's "lusty negro" in order to emphasize more clearly the oppositions between Lincoln and the slave. The nudity of the *Freedman* was double-edged, a sign at once of ideal heroism and social deprivation. But the nudity of Brown's figure reads differently when juxtaposed with the clothed figure of Lincoln, standard-bearer of civilization. The ideal aspect evaporates and the black body reads more simply as difference, as lack. This contrast is reinforced by the multiple layers of Lincoln's outfit, each adding a literal and metaphorical weight to the figure, culminating in the massive cloak clasped around his neck that spreads behind him to create a sense of columnar stability and stature. The oppositions of posture, pose, dress, size, physiognomy, and, finally, race all combine to lock the two figures into unambiguous roles.



3.9 Henry Kirke Brown, model for monument to Lincoln, 1866–67, plaster (now lost).

To Lincoln belongs human agency and divine favor; the slave is left only with gratitude and potential. Lincoln is the benevolent white authority who mediates between God and the lowly slave, while the recipient of that kindness represents a thankful, though undeveloped, race.

Brown's solution not only transforms Lincoln into "Massa" but conceptualizes emancipation as an act of manumission orchestrated by the Massa. Manumission—the master's voluntary release of individuals from bondage—was a rite stretching back to antiquity that did not in fact sever the relationship between master and slave but usually perpetuated it in another guise. Patterson in his cross-cultural study argues that manumission was a gift exchange in which the master gave the slave the gift of freedom in exchange for gratitude, patronage, and often continuing service from the ex-slave. In many cases the master continued to function as the ex-slave's authority figure and mediator with outside society. In the United States manumission was practiced but it occurred relatively rarely, generally only with slaves most likely to retain ties of dependence.[50]

Brown's two-figure model can easily be seen to illustrate this relationship of master and slave in the act of manumission. Lincoln stands as the master figure who gives the slave the benefits of freedom and divine guidance, and the slave properly kneels to show gratitude and a recognition of his benefactor's higher authority. In the ancient Roman ceremony the slave crouched beneath an official who bestowed freedom with the light touch of a rod.[51]

The reason for this tradition of placing the manumitted slave in poses of obeisance in both rite and image was to reinforce the structures of authority and submission threatened by the act of manumission. The representation of the act upheld the power relations of slavery even as the act itself freed individuals from slavery; obviously such representation was necessary since manumission took place within the system of slavery and had to be reconciled with it. All of this should underscore why the adaptation of the formula to commemorate Lincoln was so much at odds with the principle of emancipation. The case for Lincoln's historical importance rested on the abolition of slavery itself and the permanent state of dependence it fostered; the whole point of emancipation was to make slaves independent citizens, participants in the American contract. Brown's design and others like it reinforced the notion of the freed slaves as a dependent class, beholden to the white authority that had generously bestowed freedom.

Brown and his abolitionist colleagues would probably have objected that such a reading runs counter to their intentions. Typically, abolitionists argued that blacks were not naturally dependent but that slavery had plunged them in a degraded condition, which emancipation could not immediately reverse. According to the *Freedmen's Record*, an antislavery organ published in Boston, "the freedman compared to the educated white man is a child needing instruction and guidance."[52] In this way of thinking Lincoln's act could be seen as the beginning of a national effort to "raise" the slaves from their infantilized state to the new standard required of free citizens. Thus the juxtaposition of standing Lincoln and kneeling slave was probably meant to suggest a narrative of uplift from slavery rather than continuing dependence after slavery. The problem with this argument is that it takes no account of the genre of commemorative sculpture in which this image would be created and read. A monument fixes a permanent image meant to define a historical event for all time. In marble or bronze, the black youth kneeling beneath Lincoln would not get up or grow up, or change the angle of his head, or put on a shirt or a pair of shoes. Even if we accept the abolitionist narrative of degradation and elevation—which certainly has problems of its own—the composition in monumental form works to disrupt the sense of historical flow and to freeze the narrative in a premature closure. The closure