

"judge of art."⁴⁷ The story capitalizes on familiar elements of the Mills mystique: first the popular appreciation from the untutored Lincoln, then the surprise judgment of the learned critic who is won over precisely because Mills has *not* emulated the art of Europe but directly captured American history itself.

In fact, contrary to the thrust of the story, Mills did look to Europe to mediate his representation of American history. For his vast pedestal he adapted a celebrated Prussian work, the equestrian monument in Berlin to Frederick the Great by Christian Daniel Rauch, completed in 1851. In this monument a colossal equestrian statue of the king rests on a multi-tiered pedestal that serves as a kind of scaffold carrying various combinations of equestrian statues, standing figures, allegories, and bas-reliefs—representing the great men and accomplishments of the king's reign. This work inspired three huge monument proposals by Mills, the first of which was an equestrian monument to Washington proposed in the mid-1850s, the second the Lincoln monument, and the third a monument to Lincoln's adversary Robert E. Lee, entered in an 1877 competition.⁴⁸ Rauch's design gave Mills a prototype for a vast all-purpose monument, a flexible framework to accommodate all sorts of sculpture (historical portraiture, allegory, myth) in all sorts of formats (pedestrian, equestrian, bas-relief). For each monument and each ideological program, Mills reshuffled the components and filled in the iconographical blanks. He could easily shift the scheme from Union to Confederate commemoration without altering the general principle of the design. That general principle might be described in a word as conglomeration. Mills crowded as much "history" as possible onto the sculptural scaffold—history being represented primarily by an accretion of individual men, and only secondarily by allegory that suggests their collective achievement. Inscriptions or texts played no significant part.

In her monument Hosmer had tried to create a coherent movement from top to bottom, not by recourse to the unifying gesture of Lincoln himself, who was disabled within the composition, but by unfolding and interweaving key historical themes at various levels. The themes of Union and emancipation thus read as historically interconnected, converging in the martyrdom of the single hero. In Mills's design, by contrast, we confront a cacaphony of gesturing heroes, distributed on various levels that have little to do with one another. Mills made no special effort to integrate his emancipation cycle into the larger framework. It is positioned arbitrarily between two levels of white heroes; the levels could easily be reshuffled and repacked, just as they were in the other monuments of this type he designed.

Predictably Mills's design was criticized in the press as a monstrosity,⁴⁹ but remarkably the very same formal qualities that made it an aesthetic

jumble proved useful to the sponsors who adopted it. The multiplicity and interchangeability of the elements in Mills's design turned out to be well suited to the strategy of the monument campaign as it evolved over time. The association, it seems, quickly abandoned the idea of raising the vast sums necessary for a major monument simply by a mass appeal to the "loyal people," without distinction as to class or race. Instead it reconceived its base of support as a patchwork of smaller, more specialized constituencies that would be willing to fund a particular element of the monument. Mills's design lent itself quite well to this strategy of fragmenting the public into interest groups. His assemblage could easily be broken down into subcomponents, each with its own target constituency and its own separate subscription fund. To begin with, the statues of the "representative men" were conceived virtually as independent monuments, chosen not by the artist but by the association itself as it tried to assemble a cross section of interests that would bring in maximum donations. There were separate funds established for Salmon Chase, General Grant, and Henry Ward Beecher among others, with the idea that their statues would be cast in bronze as soon as the fund filled up. Statues were also assigned to key supporters of the monument: Henry Bellows, as we have seen, and James Yeatman, president of the Western Sanitary Commission, who seems to have been chosen as thanks for the \$20,000 in freedmen's money his group promised.⁵⁰

For the sponsors, what Mills's design lost in coherence it gained in the malleability and reach of its representation. Figures could be added, subtracted, or replaced at will, in a relentless search for new sources of funds. This seemed to be exactly what the sponsors had in mind from the start: they adopted the design only in its "general features," and left control of the "details" to their own board of managers, "to be decided upon from time to time, as the Board may deem advisable."⁵¹

The point is not that the fragmentation of the design reflected some truth about the public. Rather, the sponsors used the design to fragment their public, and in the process ended up fragmenting the design even further. One of the first decisions the managers made, a few months after adopting Mills's model, was to make a critical change in the emancipation cycle. In place of the final group with the kneeling slave, the managers substituted a portrait statue of Frederick Douglass, "as the representative of the liberated race"—even though Douglass was still on the board of managers at the time! In one simple move the managers created a new subscription fund and answered two of the strongest objections to Mills's cycle. They got rid of the most blatant image of subservience and introduced a specific black historical actor, a man who had liberated himself from slavery. "Under the influence of American progressivism," the association's pamphlet explained, "[he] stands forth not only freed, but

cultured."⁵² This was indeed a dramatic shift from the still degraded figure of the anonymous freedman, although the statue of Douglass did not fully join the universe of heroes on the monument because it remained segregated from the white ranks above and below him. Nevertheless, the black man now seemed to enter the realm of national history as an agent in his own right. The managers' action did receive notice and praise in a national convention of "the colored men of America" held in Washington in January 1869: a resolution was offered thanking the association for "the unmistakable recognition of our citizenship, and the patriotism of our race, in the present struggle for national unity."⁵³ Also sometime during this early period in the campaign the managers seem to have replaced the allegorical figure of time with a figure of equality, a bold reference to the central policy goal of Reconstruction championed by Douglass and other radical Republicans. But this change is difficult to determine with certainty because there are contradictory descriptions of the monument. One of the consequences of the managers' design strategy is that no one could agree on what the design was at any given moment.⁵⁴

These changes may well have helped paved the way for the Western Sanitary Commission to join its funds to the campaign. The most decisive factor, though, was probably the organizational structure of the campaign and the monument itself. Unlike the Springfield association, the Washington managers had no trouble slicing off a portion of the monument and designating it as the contribution of the freedmen. This was simply the further fracturing of a project already conceived as fractured. Moreover, the freedmen's portion was the pinnacle of the monument, containing the statue of Lincoln. The sponsors of the freedmen's fund could therefore persuade themselves that they were applying the money in the interests of the original subscribers, by giving them a statue of Lincoln and a visible sign of their civic act on the structure of the monument.

When the managers were negotiating with the Western Sanitary Commission's president, James Yeatman, they made another dramatic change to Mills's emancipation cycle. They eliminated the remaining two groups and substituted two works altogether different in theme: a female figure of "America caring for her disabled soldiers," meant to represent the work of woman; and the figure of a common soldier.⁵⁵ Their logic was straightforward. Where only one constituency, the freed slaves, had originally been represented (and pitifully at that), there were now three constituencies—freedmen, women, and veterans. The impulse for the change apparently came from a request in December 1868 by the women of the Ladies' Union Aid Society of St. Louis, who, on hearing that their colleague Yeatman was to be included on the monument, asserted that the monument would be "incomplete" without representing the work of female relief agencies. They were right, in a sense, since the logic of

"representativeness" was by now intrinsic to the design. The women's organization wanted three statues of specific women—Dorothea Dix, Clara Barton, and Mary Bickerdyke—but the board of managers refused to grant them any such historical legitimacy and reduced them to the more traditionally female role of allegory, the maternal figure of America nursing the wounded.⁵⁶ The addition of the common soldier seems to have been the managers' own idea for expanding the monument's reference.

Substituting three separate sculptures in place of the one cycle fit the operative principle of both the design and the campaign, which was to maximize representational reach. Moreover, the managers could feel satisfied that they had enhanced the dignity of the African American representation even though they had reduced its presence. Nevertheless, this final change to the emancipation imagery confirmed the increasing distance between the operative principle of the campaign and its original mission. Without the allegory of racial freedom and "progress," however compromised that was, there was no substantial representation of a common moral purpose unifying the vast cross section of heroes the managers had assembled. The figure of Lincoln on top, quill in hand, could not rescue the pedestal below from its collapse into a representational hodgepodge of disparate and ever changing elements. Writing to Yeatman from Italy, Western Sanitary Commission founder William Greenleaf Eliot complained that it was "a stupendous pot-pourri, in honor of everybody and therefore nobody."⁵⁷ Eliot put his finger right on the problem: in the rush to expand its historical representation, it had lost whatever historical meaning it once had.

Despite the sponsors' radical ideal of a monument embodying a new interracial unity, they still saw the nation as fractured into separate and racially segregated interest groups, which needed their own particular incentives to cooperate in the collective enterprise. The original vision of a public united in the general interest of universal liberty gave way to a pork-barrel model of multiple constituencies acting in self-interest. Mills's design facilitated this fracturing of the public. The populist sculptor provided the structure through which the sponsors could channel their old-fashioned patronage, dispensing representational plums to those constituencies willing to pay for them.

Ultimately the strategy failed. The managers collected nowhere near the funds necessary, and the modest sums they did collect were bizarrely managed out of the U.S. treasurer's office. Mills received at least \$10,000 from the fund for models he made of the "representative men," and other expenditures bordered on embezzlement, including, as the *New York Times* reported, almost \$1,500 to replace fur coats stolen at the 1868 presidential inaugural ball (because it took place in the Treasury Build-

ing!).⁵⁸ There were several attempts to revive the project into the 1880s, and two of the figures were actually cast in bronze, one by Mills himself in 1880 and one posthumously.⁵⁹ But the grandiose scheme by this time had no real prospects.

While it is impossible to know with certainty why one monument campaign succeeds and another fails, the record here suggests that this monument to "national unity, based on universal liberty," failed because it could not overcome the contradictions embedded within it. These were not merely the contradictions in Mills himself, egregious as they were, but in the very politics of Reconstruction, which animated the whole project. The radical Republicans who conceived the monument as their signpost proclaimed a new era of racial equality in law without building the psychological and social structures that could support equality. Without those structures their political program was doomed. By the early 1870s the nation was clearly retreating from the Reconstruction agenda of equal rights, and, increasingly, whites who had championed the cause of the freed slaves were now accusing blacks of abusing their new civic privileges. The original rhetoric of the monument's sponsors must have seemed outdated within three or four years; indeed, Bellows's 1870 article betrays none of the initial enthusiasm for universal liberty. Yet to reduce the monument's failure to politics is a little like putting the cart before the horse. The demise of Reconstruction was a failure of the culture as a whole, not just a failure to write better legislation or send more troops. Reconstruction failed because it could not (or would not) reconstruct the cultural structures underlying slavery: the idea of race and the idea of a nation built on racial opposition. The same failure was enacted in the design of the monument and of the monument's campaign, well before the political momentum of Reconstruction waned. The sponsors proclaimed a monument to national unity and universal liberty without knowing how to build those ideals into their own project. Even within the relatively narrow compass of a work of sculpture and a fund-raising strategy to get it built, they could not install an imaginary conception of the public that corresponded to what they claimed the new nation was already becoming. How could they hope to establish interracial unity when they could not give it credible form in their own work? The nation's most ambitious proposal for a monument to emancipation collapsed, we can argue, because it was dedicated to a new order that it did not comprehend and could not visualize.

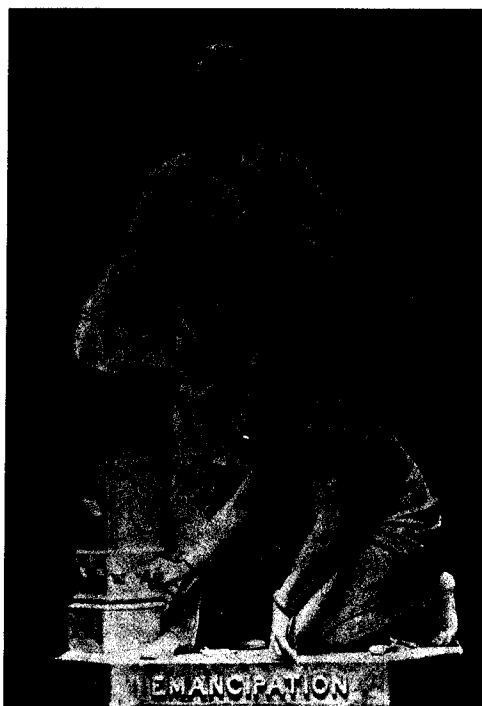
To this point, every attempt to introduce the emancipated body into national sculpture had failed. With the collapse of the campaigns behind Mills's and Hosmer's designs, the grand emancipation cycles vanished altogether, never to reappear.⁶⁰ The Freedmen's Memorial itself came close

to extinction, before being rescued and redirected to a design far more modest in scale.

The sponsors of the Freedmen's Memorial regretted their decision to join the National Lincoln Monument Association almost as soon as they had made it. Eliot's letter to James Yeatman of November 1869, complaining bitterly of the "Washington Folly," offered an alternative should the occasion ever arise. This was Thomas Ball's model of Lincoln and the kneeling slave, which Eliot had just seen and liked in Ball's Florence studio. Eliot did not give any extended analysis but merely remarked that "the African type is well maintained without over-doing" and that "the likeness of Lincoln is softened, but perfectly correct."⁶¹ Eliot, who evidently fancied himself something of a critic, was impressed with how Ball tempered the nonclassical features of both Lincoln and the African American in order to make them more conventionally sculptural.

Sometime after 1871 the Western Sanitary Commission withdrew from the moribund Washington project and commissioned Ball to execute a monument based on the group Eliot had seen. (The commission also fought off one last spirited effort to grab the freedmen's fund by the association in Springfield, which claimed to have more direct insight into the wishes of "the colored people.")⁶² The U.S. Congress agreed to pay for the pedestal and to set aside a site in a residential square on the eastern edge of Capitol Hill, at that time bordering on fields. The site was quite literally marginal, but it was directly on axis with the Capitol itself and did not suffer from the problems of the Mall, which was then a swampy overgrown mess. The monument was unveiled on the eleventh anniversary of Lincoln's death, April 14, 1876, with the president, Congress, and the Supreme Court all in attendance and with an oration by none other than Frederick Douglass.⁶³ It was a first in more than one respect. As Douglass remarked, it was the first time his "race" had ever erected a monument to a great American. It was also, as Douglass did not remark (for reasons that will become clearer), the first time his "race" had ever appeared in a national monument.

As finally executed the figure of the black man differed in a few respects from Ball's original. The commissioners saw the original figure (fig. 3.11) as both passive and idealized. Despite Eliot's original reaction that the "African type" was not overdone, they asked Ball for a more "representative form of a negro," without the liberty cap, and in a pose "helping to break the chain that had bound him."⁶⁴ As Yeatman later explained, this would "bring the presentation nearer to the historical fact, by making the emancipated slave an agent in his own deliverance."⁶⁵ It is interesting that the sponsors noted some of the basic defects of the manumission iconography, notably the way it deprived the freed slave of any agency in his own emancipation. The solution, as they saw it, was to transform the slave from the ideal figure sporting the liberty cap into a realistic portrait



4.5 Thomas Ball, model for Freedmen's Memorial to Lincoln, circa 1874, plaster (now lost).

figure, and to change his pose. The commissioners sent Ball photographs of a former slave named Archer Alexander, who was harbored by Eliot in 1863 while on the run from slavery and who then became his servant. Ball remodeled the facial features after the photos, and he made one slight change to the pose: he straightened the figure's bent right arm and made it culminate in a clenched fist (fig. 4.5). Yeatman asserted at the dedication that "the ideal group is thus converted into the literal truth of history without losing anything of its artistic conception or effect."⁶⁶

From our vantage point Ball's composition became an even stranger hybrid of allegory and realism. The new historical specificity of the black figure, insofar as it was recognizable at all, made the narrative conceit of Lincoln and the slave much more difficult to sustain. Putting the face of a real man on the allegorical slave not only made the figure's nudity nonsensical but also changed the dynamics of the piece entirely. It now became a group portrait of two historical figures who had never actually met, much less under the circumstances Ball's design suggests. Read as the "literal truth of history," the monument was bound to have troubling implications.

It is worth looking for a moment at the historical figure of Archer Alexander whose likeness was supposed to help guarantee that literal truth, especially since Eliot and the commission took every opportunity to emphasize Alexander's presence on the monument itself. Eliot published a narrative of the monument and its unknown hero some twenty years later.⁶⁷ This little volume is the best document we have of the mentality of the monument's sponsors, and it is a fascinating revelation of the ironies that pervaded the whole project. There is the irony that Alexander was Eliot's servant, and so the inevitably subservient relationship of the former slave to the monument's sponsor was in a sense reencoded in the design of the monument. But this is a rather superficial observation and does not begin to capture the complexities of Eliot's account. The book is largely the story of Alexander's escape in 1863 from a Confederate-sympathizing slaveholder in Missouri, and his subsequent travails as a fugitive in this border state where slavery was still legal but the institution was eroding under the pressure of military rule. Eliot's narrative confronted a basic problem from the start: since Alexander was owned in Missouri, he was not even indirectly freed by Lincoln's proclamation, which did not apply in the border states. If anything, the choice of Alexander underscored the real historical limitations of Lincoln's act. Eliot's book reveals that he was no strong fan of Lincoln's. Eliot had supported Frémont, the initial military commander in Missouri, who was fired by Lincoln because he issued a proclamation freeing all slaves of disloyal masters. (In fact, it was Frémont who authorized the foundation of the Western Sanitary Commission.) Lincoln, in Eliot's words, "unfortunately and unwisely revoked" Frémont's proclamation, so instead of declaring Alexander free Lincoln had actually declared him still a slave!⁶⁸

Alexander owed his freedom to his own escape and to the sympathetic policies of the military authorities in Missouri in early 1863, who were then allied with antislavery unionists. He found his way to Eliot's property on the outskirts of St. Louis in February, and Eliot obtained a military order giving protection to Alexander. Alexander was then kidnapped by bounty hunters, only to be recaptured dramatically by the military authorities and returned to Eliot's home. What Eliot does not report is that if Alexander had escaped a few months later his fate might have been different because Lincoln, under pressure from proslavery unionists, once again removed the military commander responsible for the liberal protection of fugitive slaves. Shortly after Alexander's rescue, Lincoln replaced both the Union commander and the provost marshal who had signed Alexander's protection papers.⁶⁹ As Eliot knew well but only suggested between the lines, Lincoln was really a hindrance to freedom in this particular narrative. Eliot's defense of the "truth" of the monument, at the end of the narrative, therefore rings hollow: "His freedom came directly

from the hand of President Lincoln, by provost-marshal authority, and his own hands had helped to break the chains that bound him."⁷⁰ Lincoln was only nominally in charge of the "provost-marshal authority" and he did his level best to prevent that authority from assisting the policy of emancipation.

Eliot concluded his narrative with an anecdote about Alexander's reaction to seeing himself represented on the freedmen's monument. Eliot writes that Alexander began to laugh and then, "he presently sobered down and exclaimed, 'Now I'se a white man! Now I'se free!'"⁷¹ The anecdote, as constructed by Eliot, is peculiarly double-edged. It is supposed to explain and indeed celebrate Alexander's inclusion in an honorific medium devoted to white men, while at the same time it points with a kind of paternal wink at Alexander's naiveté. The story cancels its own message; it confirms the distance between the high-cultural enterprise of sculpture and the low-cultural subject of the black man, the man whose dialect marks his blackness even as he asserts his whiteness ("Now I'se a white man"). So too does the monument cancel its own presumed message: it permits a space for the black man in national sculpture only by withholding the promise of a common masculinity, by insisting instead on the overarching opposition of whiteness and blackness.

The racial integration of monumental sculpture gestured toward what Frederick Douglass had demanded in 1865—the black man's "incorporation into the American body politic." With its three-dimensional presence, its attention to the human body in space, sculpture was ideally suited to realizing that corporeal metaphor of civic participation. As Eliot's anecdote presupposes, public sculpture was a promised land of sorts, offering not only representation in the symbolic space of nationality but "elevation" into the inner sanctum of white culture. Yet the logic of the medium betrayed its message of uplift, for it fixed its white and black figures in an immutable relationship. In bronze, Archer Alexander can never rise and stand, never come to consciousness of his own power. The narrative remains frozen in place, the monument perpetuating its image of racial difference for eternity.

It is no wonder, then, that Douglass in his oration did not draw attention to Alexander and his unprecedented appearance in the medium of public sculpture. According to the historian John Cromwell, who heard the speech at close range, Douglass referred to the black figure only once, in an ad-libbed aside which did not appear in the published version. As Cromwell later paraphrased it, Douglass objected to the monument's design because "it showed the negro on his knee when a more manly attitude would have been indicative of freedom."⁷² The concern here with "manliness" is consistent with Douglass's lifelong understanding of masculinity as the structural opposite of slavery, an understanding that

inevitably gendered emancipation as well. In the same oration Douglass claimed that under Lincoln's rule "we saw ourselves gradually lifted from the depths of slavery to the heights of liberty and manhood."⁷³ For Douglass entry into civic life meant that racial difference was subordinated to the common mantle of masculinity; as he argued in 1865, "the fact of my being a negro is far less important in determining my duty than the fact that I am a 'man,' and linked to all mankind as a man and a brother."⁷⁴ Emancipation, whether figured as the acquisition of whiteness or of masculinity, implied a rise to a position of dominance. Ball's black man was still mired in the depths of the dominated—neither white nor manly nor free.

The monument's sponsors would have us believe that Ball's changes had corrected this deficiency. It all hinged on the new right arm supposedly breaking the chains, and its ability to convey self-determination. Yet that tensed arm, with its clenched fist, is simply attached to the rest of the body, which in all essential respects retains the original pose. It seems that Ball tried to combine two incompatible narratives in one body's movement. The original narrative was one of recognition, that very first moment of emancipation when the slave realizes that his chains have somehow been broken and lifts his head in response. The second narrative is one of resistance, and it renders the first narrative nonsensical.⁷⁵ How can the slave just come to recognize his broken chains when he himself has been doing the breaking? It could happen only in an infantile sense, as when a baby comes to recognize something she or he has inadvertently accomplished. Resistance, the deliberate defiance of an external authority, really cannot be embodied in Ball's self-contained figure. His figure is all about coming to consciousness, the first internal awakening of a human being prostrated by oppression. Resistance belongs to a later (or earlier) stage in this figure's story. The narrative becomes even more contradictory when the second figure in the group is taken into account. Why is the slave straining against his chains when his deliverer hovers over him? It made some sense to join the two figures in this way when the conceit was that Lincoln had bestowed freedom on the unknowing slave, but now that the slave participates knowingly in his own liberation Lincoln must hover as a sort of anxious parent watching over the child trying to do for himself. The contradictions multiply simply because Ball did not rethink the slave's body as a whole. To do so would have required a drastic change in the relationship of the two figures—in effect, a new monument.

The changes the sponsors requested could not be accommodated meaningfully within the basic framework of Ball's design. Their request was, fundamentally, absurd, and Ball responded understandably by making the least change possible. For Douglass these minor revisions made