

treasure, and produce the loss of over 620,000 lives. Each was convinced that the other side would not fight, or that if there was a war, it would be short—essentially one battle. Furthermore, Confederate leaders discerned definite advantages from a war, which they believed would force the hand of the upper South and precipitate these states' secession. Adding the upper South would greatly strengthen the Confederacy in terms of size, population, resources, wealth, and military capacity. And perhaps most important, underlying to each side's willingness to fight was the belief that it would win. After years of bitter sectional rivalry, it was almost with a sigh of relief that the residents of both sections greeted this final resolution.

In April of 1861 both sides went to war to save democracy as they understood it. For southern secessionists, at stake was the right of self-government and the fundamental right of southern whites to control their own destiny. For the North, the war was a struggle to uphold the democratic principles of law and order and majority rule, as expressed in a fair and free election, as well as preserve the Union, which they believed was inseparably linked to democracy. In endorsing the decision for war, few Northerners appreciated the fundamental irony that they were ready to kill their fellow Americans in order to prove that democracy was a workable form of government.

5

*The Divided South,
Democracy's Limitations,
and the Causes of the Peculiarly
North American Civil War*

WILLIAM W. FREEHLING

DEMOCRACY HAS BECOME the most coveted American export. The cold war has been won; the democratic way vindicated. Throughout yesterday's totalitarian half of the globe, long-repressed voices demand freedom of speech, free elections, and majority rule. As the twenty-first century approaches, Americans have seemingly lived up to their seventeenth-century forebears' ambition: to become a City Upon a Hill for all the world to emulate.

Such ideological imperialism, however, has sometimes ill-served this nation. In striving to spread their supposedly ideal political system, Americans on occasion have generated foreign policy disasters, especially in Vietnam. So now more than ever, historians must remind their fellow citizens that democracy, like all things human, is no universal panacea. American democracy indeed could not peacefully resolve our own gravest social problem, slavery. It is a telling historical irony that of all the New World slavocracies, only slaveholders in the United States lived in an advanced republic, and only the United States required a civil war between whites to abolish slavery for blacks.

Despite that singularity of the American Civil War, violence sometimes accompanied emancipation in less republican New World regimes. Abolition in Haiti evolved out of an equally singular civil war, in that case between slaves and slaveholders. Agitation over emancipation also led to some bloodshed in Cuba. So too, slaveholders' rage at not receiving recompense for

their slaves helped inspire a revolution in Brazil after emancipation. But nowhere else in the Americas did slaveholders rise in revolution before emancipation, accepting the risks of a military showdown with nonslaveholders.

The southern slaveholders' unique acceptance of trial by warfare demanded unique self-confidence. Secession required both nerve and the perception of power. The Brazilian and Cuban slavocracies could have no such nerve in the 1870s and 1880s, after watching U.S. slaveholders go down in flames in the 1860s. Nor did their nondominant position in their respective political power structures embolden Cuban or Brazilian slaveholders with the illusion that they could win a civil war.

Latin American slaveholders also lacked illusions about their worldwide economic power. No Caribbean or South American planter imagined that his European customers would intervene on his side in a New World civil war. Fantasies that European customers would bolster King Cotton's army, however, rarely dominated the secessionists' thinking. Rather, U.S. slaveholders' unique political power inside a peculiarly advanced republic above all else instilled in them the illusion—and for a long while the reality—that they could control slavery's fate.¹

Or to be more accurate, the minority of slaveholders inside the U.S. majoritarian republic swung between feelings of infuriating powerlessness and perceptions of imperial powerfulness, as they exerted their unusual leverage over slavery's destiny. On the one hand, some ideological and institutional aspects of U.S. republicanism empowered nonslaveholding majorities to assault the slaveholding minority. Because of the possibility of majority control, U.S. slaveholders were potentially as much at the mercy of outside forces as were Latin American slaveholders, who could only postpone their less democratic governments' emancipation decrees. On the other hand, some aspects of the U.S. republican system, as embedded in the Constitution, empowered the slaveholder minority to resist emancipation in a manner impossible elsewhere in the Americas. The southern minority's power over the northern majority inspired a new northern word, the most charged in the antebellum political vocabulary: *Slavepower*.

The term connoted the driving force of the U.S. sectional controversy: the slaveholders' arguably undemocratic power over northern white citizens no less than over southern black slaves.

All of the resulting thrusts for power—the northern majority's disavowal of the Slavepower's dominion over whites, the southern minority's secession from the Union after the northern majority rejected Slavepower rule, fugitive slaves' escape from their masters, the Border South's defiance of Deep South disunionism, the North's reversal of slaveholders' secession from the Union—all this unraveling of a republic and coercive reconsolidation stemmed from the foundations of American democratic practice and belief. But America had become an ugly City Upon a Hill, demonstrating that the world's most advanced republic could end slavery only by one of the bloodiest fratricides in human history.

I

THE DIVERGENT U.S. and Latin American roads toward emancipation began with dissimilar colonial settlements. During the seventeenth century, England, the most republican of the European colonizing nations, sent to the North American mainland by far the largest percentage of nonslaveholding settlers to be found in any New World area containing large numbers of slaves.² Because of that comparatively huge white republican population, the thirteen colonies had special leverage to resist English metropolitan impositions on colonial republicanism; and out of that resistance came the American Revolution and the first New World liberation from Old World control. With the establishment of the federal Union, the Revolutionaries encased one of the most extensive slaveholder regimes in the Americas inside the most republican nation in the New World.

Within the republican Union, advanced Anglo-American anti-slavery ideas could especially flourish—if abolitionists could mobilize the majority of nonslaveholders. Yet within the Union, the minority of slaveholders had a special New World power to protect themselves—if they could mobilize the masses. Nowhere else in the New World did slavery's fate hang on popular mobilization.

A second peculiarity in colonial settlement of the future United States ultimately threatened slaveholder mobilization of southern public opinion. Just as a higher proportion of non-slaveholding whites peopled the original thirteen colonies than could be found in other New World locales with large numbers of slaves, so only North American colonists planted slavery primarily in nontropical areas. Anglo-American economists have always echoed the Latin American colonials' conventional wisdom that tropical climates spawned the largest plantation profits. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English settlers, however, considered the climate of the most tropical part of North America, the Lower South, too cool for sugar and coffee, Latin America's profitable plantation products. North American colonists turned to other tropical crops for the Georgian and South Carolinian swamplands and Sea Islands on the Atlantic coast. In these Lower South tropics, huge slave gangs grew rice, indigo, and Sea Island cotton.

Nowhere west of the Lower South's coastal swamps, however, could these crops be lucratively extended. The most far-flung North American eighteenth-century slaveholder enterprises instead thrived northward, still farther from the sugar and coffee-producing tropics. North of South Carolina—in Middle South latitudes—North Carolina and especially Virginia planters raised primarily tobacco. North of the Middle South—in Border South latitudes—Delaware and especially Maryland planters raised less tobacco and more grains. Farther yet from the tropics—in the most southern part of the eventually free-labor North—Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York grain farmers used some slaves; and in New England, a few Puritans utilized house slaves. In late-eighteenth-century North America, the coolest locale of New World slaveholders, almost four slaves out of five lived north of the more tropical Lower South.

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, an invention and a law pressed U.S. slavery toward tropical habitats. Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1793 impelled the movement of slaveholders toward Lower South frontiers. Fourteen years later, in 1807, the federal government's closure of the

African slave trade contracted the Cotton Kingdom's source of slaves. Unlike mid-nineteenth-century tropical developers in Cuba and Brazil, the two other large New World slavocracies, cotton planters could not legally buy slaves from Africa. But only U.S. slaveholders could purchase slaves from their own northerly, relatively nontropical areas, which had concurrently fallen into chronic economic recession.

A slave drain ensued, especially from the more northern South to the more southern South. Between 1790 and 1860, some 750,000 Middle and Border South slaves traveled downriver to the Cotton Kingdom. The Lower South, which had had 21 percent of U.S. slaves in 1790, had 59 percent in 1860. Maryland and Virginia, with 60 percent in 1790, had 18 percent in 1860. Some 37 percent of Lower South white families owned slaves in 1860, compared with only 12 percent in the Border South, down from 20 percent in 1790.³

At the same time that the more southerly U.S. slaveholders expanded toward Latin American-style tropical locations, the more northerly U.S. slavocracy contracted toward Latin American-style antislavery ideas. The Latin American slavocracies lacked the power to defy worldwide antislavery currents in the manner of Lower South slaveholders. Latin slaveholders instead gave ground grudgingly, stalling for more time to reap profits, mostly through the passage of so-called free-womb laws. These edicts freed only slaves born after a given law's enactment and only after they reached a distant target age, usually eighteen or twenty-one. These laws set a clock ticking toward the end of slavery.

The clock ran slowly, satisfyingly so from Latin American slaveholders' perspective. A slave born even a day before a law was passed would never be freed, which meant that slavery could profitably persist for at least fifty years. As for lucky slaves born at the right time, they were lucklessly doomed to involuntary servitude throughout their youth; and by the time they were twelve years old, black children toiled hard in the fields. A series of Latin American regimes with relatively few slaves, including Chile, Peru, and Venezuela, first tried delaying emancipation

through free-womb laws. Then in the two Latin American countries with large slave populations, Cuba's Moret Law (1870) and Brazil's Rio Branco Law (1871) brought the free-womb tradition to climax.

Nowhere did free-womb emancipation work as slowly as entrepreneurs had hoped. Abolitionists and slaves pressed for a faster end to the system. Slaves born only a short time before passage of a free-womb law deployed especially angry resistance. In response, slaveholders often bargained individually with their slaves, scheduling freedom for each before the law freed any. Slaves, in return, promised to labor willingly during the interim.

These bargains drew on older Latin American manumission traditions. Latins had long liberated favorite slaves under certain conditions: when a master and a cherished black woman had a sexual relationship; when beloved mulatto offspring had resulted from such a union; or when a slave had given especially valued economic service. The combination of free-womb laws, expanded manumissions, intensified abolitionist attacks, and more widespread slave resistance finally toppled the regimes in Cuba in 1886 and Brazil in 1888—or before these slavocracies' respective free-womb laws had freed any slave.

These Latin American patterns, shunned in U.S. tropical areas where slavery was concentrating, had originated in U.S. temperate areas where the institution was dwindling. Free-womb emancipation bore a different title in the United States—post-nati emancipation—but only the name was different. In 1780, Pennsylvania enacted the hemisphere's first post-nati law. In 1799, New York followed suit, as did New Jersey in 1804. In 1817, New York followed up its preliminary post-nati law in the later Cuba/Brazil manner, declaring an end to the institution ten years hence.

South of these belatedly emancipated Middle Atlantic states, slaveholding states never passed a post-nati law. The Border South, however, emulated another aspect of Latin American gradualism: individual manumissions. Different nations took censuses of their populations in different years, which makes comparisons imprecise. Still, a similar pattern of manumission

is clear enough. In 1830, 19.5 percent of black residents of the Border South were free, compared with 23 percent in Brazil (in 1817–18) and 46 percent in Cuba (in 1846). Two Border South states manumitted their slaves at rates faster than the Latin American norm. By 1830 in Maryland, 34 percent of the resident blacks were free, as were 83 percent of Delaware's blacks.⁴

But just as post-nati laws penetrated no farther south than the Middle Atlantic states, so manumissions flourished no farther south than the Border South. While 21 percent of Border South blacks were free in 1860, the percentage sank to 7 percent in the Middle South and 1.5 percent in the Lower South. The Border South manumission story was a subplot of the larger tale: that U.S. slavery was incrementally waning in northern nontropical habitats but rapidly strengthening in southwestern tropical locales.

With slavery swiftly concentrating southward and slowly fading northward, different social attitudes and political priorities developed. Lower South slaveholders came to call slavery a probably perpetual blessing, while Border South masters persistently called the institution a hopefully temporary evil. So too Lower South political warriors cared more about perpetuating slavery than the Union, while Border South leaders would compromise on slavery in order to save the Union. Still, even in Delaware, where over 15,000 slaves in 1790 had shrunk to under 2000 in 1860, slaveholders resisted final emancipation. In Maryland, where manumissions plus slave sales to the Lower South had halved the percentage of white slaveholding families, the increasingly outnumbered slavocracy counterattacked desperately in the mid-1850s, futilely seeking to re-enslave the freed blacks. Concurrently, in Missouri, the state's even faster declining fraction of slaveholders counterattacked still more desperately, unsuccessfully seeking to establish slavery in neighboring Kansas.

In the mid-nineteenth century, then, slaveholders overwhelmingly controlled the Lower South, which had been belatedly but massively developed. The slavocracy somewhat less solidly controlled the Middle and Border South, where percentages of slave owners were slowly dropping. But even in the

Border South, vestiges (and sometimes defiant concentrations) of the old relatively nontropical slavocracy occasionally fought to salvage a fading system. The mature Slave South had a tropical base of states, containing large slave populations, and several layers of buffer zones to the north, with less tropical conditions and less proslavery commitments and fewer slaves in each successive tier above.

Yet despite this degree of geographic disunity, no other New World slavocracy could muster as united a front against worldwide antislavery currents. The difference between slaveholders' unity, albeit incomplete, in the United States and their utter disarray in Brazil is especially revealing, for similar experiences yielded dissimilar outcomes. In both countries, a once-flourishing northerly slaveholding region fell into decline and sold many of its slaves to a newly flourishing southerly region. In the United States, the Upper South Tobacco Kingdom sold hundreds of thousands of slaves to the Lower South Cotton Kingdom. In Brazil, the Northeastern Sugar Kingdom, which in 1822 had held almost 70 percent of the country's slaves, transferred equally huge numbers of blacks to the South Central Coffee Kingdom, which by the early 1880s owned 65 percent of Brazil's slaves.⁵

There the similarity ended. In Brazil, the old sugar provinces, despite a population still 15 percent enslaved, led the movement for free-womb abolition, with the Ceará region in the vanguard. When the national Chamber of Delegates voted on the Rio Branco free-womb bill in 1871, the Northeastern sugar provinces favored gradual emancipation, 39–6, thus canceling out the South Central coffee provinces' 30–12 vote against.⁶ The Border South, in contrast, usually voted with the Lower South on slavery propositions in Congress and never enacted a post-nati law.

A more intense racism fueled the U.S. slaveholders' greater capacity to mobilize a united front. Because Latin American racial attitudes toward blacks were less hidebound than in the United States, greater tolerance for free-womb emancipation, for mulattoes, and for individual manumissions—and less willingness to

fight a civil war over the issue—pervaded Latin American slavocracies. Because U.S. racism was so extreme, a more unified slaveholding class and more support from white nonslaveholders—and thus a greater capacity to fight a civil war—infused the Slave South.

Behind the more severe U.S. racism lay in part a different heterosexual situation, itself another result of the largest white migration to an important New World slavocracy. English colonists to the future United States migrated far more often in family groups and/or with equal numbers of unmarried males and females in the entourage than did colonists headed farther south, who more often sought their fortunes as unattached males, with only slaves available for sexual liaisons. More frequent and less taboo interracial sexual intimacies resulted south of British North America, which led to more mulattoes and less insistence that the world be rigidly separated into black and white.

Politically no less than biologically, U.S. slaveholders preferred nothing between black and white. The very basis of black slavery, in so republican a regime for whites, had to be a rigid color line. The Old South had to cleave advanced republicanism for whites totally from abject slavery for blacks. That black and white separation mystified Brazilian quasi-republicans, to say nothing of Latin American nonrepublicans. Only U.S. slaveholders, in short, considered *free black* an oxymoron.

Some historians doubt that racism was more culturally deep-seated in the United States than south of the border. That position founders before the greater U.S. taboo surrounding miscegenation and the far greater desire to deport blacks from antebellum America than from any other New World slavocracy. But the comparative power of cultural racism *before* slaveholders politically mobilized is unimportant to the comparative history of emancipation, for uniquely in the United States, slaveholders had to mobilize nonslaveholders, and racism was their most potent weapon. After southern slaveholders had used the distinction between equality for all whites and inequality for all blacks to rally the nonslaveholders, southern racism inarguably had become an especially powerful idea.

The racial foundation of Southwide unity, however, was a two-edged sword. For racism to unite nonslaveholders and slaveholders, the black race had to be significantly present. With the slave drain to the Lower South and the movement of European whites to such northerly slave states as Maryland and Missouri, Border South blacks became steadily less visible. As for that highly visible group of blacks in northern Maryland and Delaware, the free blacks, their energetic labor and law-abiding deportment demonstrated that racial control hardly required slavery.

That conclusion had proved fatal to slavery in northern states, where percentages of blacks had declined. In the colonial period, New York had had slave proportions in the 1860 Border South's range, about 15 percent of the total population. As New York's slave percentage had dwindled toward 5 percent, sentiment for post-nati emancipation had grown. Mid-nineteenth-century Border South states were in no immediate danger of becoming a New York, much less a Brazilian Ceará. But given the Border South's waning percentage of blacks, its Latin American-style manumissions, its propensity for thinking of slavery as a temporary evil, and its commitment to Union-saving compromises on the institution, could the Lower South rely on its northern hinterlands' future loyalty?

On the answer hung the Slave South's capacity to be that unique New World slave regime: the one that could defy an emancipating century rather than settle for a few more decades of slaveholder profits. Latin American slavocracies lacked not only the South's intensely racist reasons to stonewall antislavery but also its political basis for confidence that emancipation could be routed. The Latin American slavocracies were either too vulnerable to black insurrection (as in Haiti), too much under the power of European empires (as in the French and British West Indies and in Spanish-owned Cuba), or too small a minority (as in Venezuela and Peru) to command their fate inside a government that could abolish slavery. True, the Latin American regime closest in type to the southern slaveholders, the Brazilian slavocracy, also possessed a powerful minority in a partly parliament-ruled (and partly monarchical) nation. But

Brazilian slaveholders, compared with their more intransigent U.S. counterparts, were too divided against each other over slavery's future, too lacking in a rigid racism that might control the nonslaveholders, and too fond of a *regime des notables* to risk enfranchising and mobilizing the "nonnotables." Unable to mount a united front, in or out of parliament, the Brazilian slavocracy could only postpone emancipation with Rio Branco laws. The Old South, in contrast, had various powers to command a majoritarian democracy despite its minority status—if all fifteen slave states hung together and the Border South did not go the way of New York, or worse, Ceará.

Numbers indicate how much was at stake in that *if*: The seven Lower South states of 1860 (South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, with 47 percent of their population enslaved) could not fight off the eighteen northern states (containing 61 percent of the American population) without the enthusiastic support of the four Middle South states (Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas, with 32 percent of their population enslaved) and the four Border South states (Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri, with 13 percent of their population enslaved). Those buffer areas above the Lower South could come under siege—the siege of democratic public opinion. Would the Border South remain four-square behind slavery and the Lower South, even if the slavocracy's northern hinterlands came to possess scantier and scantier percentages of blacks?

That question transcended the Border South. The slaveholders' worst internal problem involved not a single localized place but a regionwide lopsided distribution of blacks. While the Border South was the most widespread locale with a relatively low percentage of slaves, some areas farther south also contained few blacks; and everywhere a paucity of slaves allowed more nonslaveholder hostility toward slaveholders. Wherever blacks were concentrated, whites drew together, however much the poor resented the rich, for lowly whites despised lowlier blacks even more than they resented lordly masters. But whenever blacks were scarce, race hatred intensified class hatred, for

nonslaveholders preferred to have neither autocrats nor blacks around. A relatively slaveless situation, while most prevalent in the Border South, also predominated in western Virginia, in eastern Tennessee, and in piney woods and semimountainous areas of the Lower South. Here the Border South predicament came closer to home to worried Lower and Middle South slavocrats. Could upper-class ideology command lower-class loyalties in areas where no racial tensions united the whites?

II

STRUGGLES FOR ideological command often take a dialectical form of charge and response. In the United States, intensified versions of white republicanism and antiblack racism generated a dialectic about slavery different than that in Latin America. At the heart of the difference lay two fears foreign to Latin America. First, slavery and the slavery issue might destroy an advanced white men's republic. Second, emancipation might also devastate a white republic unless freed blacks were removed.

The North American dialogue about emancipation began with the foundation of U.S. republicanism, the Declaration of Independence. When the Founding Fathers asserted that *all* men are created equal, they immediately confronted a moral dilemma: their long unquestioned institution of slavery had become an anomaly in the republic they sought. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, author of the Declaration and a large slaveholder, believed that all men would and should rise up against so antirepublican a horror as slavery. He thus feared that slave insurrection would disrupt white republics unless white republicans freed blacks. He also worried that southern republican leaders would become irresponsible tyrants if youths learned to exercise power by lashing dissolute blacks. Thus did the U.S. slavery controversy early take its special tack: Whites would always worry not only about whether blacks ought to be freed but about how white republicanism could be preserved.

Yet if Jefferson called slavery antithetical to republicanism, he considered racism compatible with the Declaration of Independence. Whites and blacks, thought Jefferson, were innately

different. Whites allegedly possessed a keener abstract intelligence; blacks a keener sexual ardency. Ex-slaves, he further worried, would be eager for revenge and ex-masters determined to repress the avengers. If slaves were freed and remained in the United States, "deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites" and "ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained" would "produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of one or the other race."⁷

Thus to preserve white republics, freed blacks had to be deported. The dangerous alternative was to keep blacks enslaved. Jefferson's conviction that emancipation must be conditional on removing blacks, the first thrust in the U.S. dialectic on abolition, was rare in Latin America.⁸ An insistence on race removal would have ill-suited Latin American nations, where individual bargains between masters and slaves slowly led to a third class of semifree blacks and a fourth class of free blacks. The supposed necessity that U.S. slaveholders must choose between enslaving or removing blacks also misfit the situation in Delaware and Maryland, where black freedmen formed an orderly working class. But because U.S. slaveholders saw the world through the lens of a rigid non-Latin-American-style racism, the successful manumissions in Maryland and Delaware went unacknowledged, even unseen, as if the phenomenon of orderly free blacks *could* not happen and therefore *had* not happened. Instead, that more common Upper South phenomenon, the removal of slaves by sales to the Lower South, became the model for further action in the selling region. Proposals for stepping up the removal of blacks from the Upper South included expulsion to Africa, deportation to the Caribbean, and legislatively induced accelerated sales to the Lower South through the passage of post-nati laws.

By sometimes campaigning for Latin American-style post-nati proposals, with the non-Latin American purpose of forcing the removal of blacks, Upper South emancipators demonstrated again the U.S. slave regime's oddity in hemispheric perspective. In Latin America, free-womb laws were *nationally* enacted. Thus

slaveholders in one part of the nation could not subvert emancipation by selling the bondsman before his emancipating birthday to another part of the nation. But in the United States, where only states passed post-nati laws, a slaveholder could sell his soon-to-be-freed slaves into permanent thralldom by transporting them to a state that lacked the law. Thus could one state remove its blacks, with slave purchasers in another state paying to "whiten" the selling state's population.

Some northern masters first discovered this singular black removal process. After their states passed post-nati laws, nineteenth-century New York and New Jersey slaveholders often sold their slaves down South before an emancipating birthday. Few northern legislators cheered such a cynical evasion of abolition. Most northern masters also deplored the loophole, but New York slaveholders still used it perhaps two-thirds of the time, thus permanently enslaving thousands of blacks whose future freedom had been decreed.⁹

This process, unintended by northern legislatures, became the deliberate intention of southern not-so-antislavery legislators when they appropriated the post-nati proposal. Southern propositions for the ploy began in the Virginia antislavery debate of 1831-32, an episode that ironically has been mistaken for the end of southern consideration of abolition. In the wake of Nat Turner's slave revolt, the most successful (although still abortive) slave uprising in the United States, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, Jefferson's favorite grandson, proposed to the Virginia legislature that slaves born after 1840 be freed on their eighteenth (women) and twenty-first (men) birthdays. Thus far Randolph's proposal was standard Latin American-style free-womb emancipation. But Randolph's bill added the condition, alien to Latin America, that the state must remove the freedmen to Africa. Randolph's speech for the historic proposal also featured the cynical prediction, more alien still south of the U.S. border, that many Virginia masters would sell slaves to the Lower South before emancipating birthdays. Thus, Randolph cheered, masters would profitably remove slaves from Virginia at no cost to state coffers.

Randolph's proposal led to a famous state crisis, for Virginia's largely nonslaveholding areas rallied behind Jefferson's grandson in defiance of slaveholding areas. Never before in the history of the Slave South, and never again until western Virginia seceded from Virginia during the Civil War, was the potentially dangerous antagonism between slaveless and slaveholding geographic zones more obvious, for here western Virginian non-slaveholders sought to impose emancipation on eastern Virginia planters. Earlier, eastern squires had built a bulwark against the nonslaveholder threat. They had insisted that slaveholders have more seats in the Virginia House of Delegates (lower house) than eastern Virginia's white numbers justified. The underrepresented western Virginians responded, as did later Northerners, that the Slavepower thus enslaved *them*. These nonslaveholders preferred that all blacks depart the commonwealth. Then true white democracy would replace Slavepower dominion in Virginia. So western Virginians cheered Thomas Jefferson Randolph's black removal proposal.

After two weeks of debate, the Virginia House of Delegates rejected a variation of Randolph's proposal by a vote of 73-58. The margin against antislavery would have shriveled to one vote if the slaveholders had not held those extra legislative seats. The shaky anti-Randolph majority warned that even after masters had sold off some blacks, state-financed removal of other slaves would bankrupt the government. Nor should the government bully masters into selling bondsmen by placing post-nati deadlines over capitalists' heads. But Randolph's none-too-proslavery opponents, also desiring an altogether white Virginia, predicted that masters' capitalistic decisions would dispatch Virginia slaves southward without the threat of post-nati laws. Thomas R. Dew, then Virginia's most famous advocate of slavery, was pleased that all Middle South slaves would eventually be sold to the Lower South, for Virginia was "too far north" for slavery.¹⁰

Dew's proposed remedy, removing slaves by altogether-voluntary private sales, could keep slavery and blacks too far north for a long time. Thomas Jefferson had proposed a swifter way to deport blacks: a federal constitutional amendment that

would authorize compulsory emancipation and colonization to be financed by federal land sales, a richer source of funds than state taxation. Throughout the nation, antislavery moderates perpetuated this scheme for liberating slaves while also whitening the republic. The persistent admirers of Jefferson's black removal plan included the Border South's favorite statesman, Henry Clay; the Republicans' favorite politician, Abraham Lincoln; and the North's favorite novelist, Harriet Beecher Stowe. A national volunteer organization, the American Colonization Society, used private donations to establish a rather unstable African colony, Liberia, to receive American blacks. In those unusual days of a federal budgetary surplus, the national government had excess funds to help with the financing. But South Carolina threatened secession if Congress even discussed the possibility. So the debate stopped before much was said.

III

IN POST-JEFFERSON AMERICA, as in post-Nat Turner Virginia, that first thrust of the U.S. dialectic on slavery, the abolition-conditional-on-removal argument, was yielding little black removal, save the slave drain southward, which was not antislavery at all. Thus did the conditional antislavery polemic, unusual in Latin America, generate its opposite, also uncommon in Latin America: northern extremists' exasperated attack on black removal and on all conditions that must be observed before slavery could be immediately abolished.¹¹ William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* articulated this assault on procrastination, beginning in 1831. Black deportation, Garrison wrote angrily, was as outrageous as black slavery, for blacks were created equal. Furthermore, democracy must abolish slavery or slavery would abolish democracy, for masters with sinful absolute power and a republic with salutary limited power were deadly foes.

The black-removal idea lay forever discredited among northern antislavery extremists after Garrison's savage assault. But here as everywhere, posterity should never confuse the northern extremists with the northern mainstream. The argument that antislavery must be conditional on removing black freedmen

retained thousands of northern supporters for every Garrisonian and hundreds of thousands of Upper South supporters with scarcely a southern Garrisonian to be found. The debate between Garrison's unconditional immediatism and Jefferson's conditional gradualism would persist until deep into the Civil War. Then blacks' wartime utility helped the Garrisonians rout the long-more-powerful Jeffersonian black-removal tradition.

Jefferson's and Garrison's positions, while clashing on black removal, agreed that black slavery poisoned white democracy. That concurrence did not augur well for the slaveholding minority. White racist nonslaveholders, the majority of citizens in the South and in the nation, had to be deterred from believing that black slavery endangered white democracy and/or that blacks could safely be removed. Thus conditional and unconditional antislavery together generated, in the next phase of the United States' unique dialogue on slavery, the predictable proslavery response: Without slavery, both blacks and democracy would expire.

Although proslavery Latin Americans also sometimes dwelled on blacks' alleged inferiority, the racial argument for *black* slavery was more necessary in a white men's republic, and race-based arguments were more central in U.S. proslavery polemics. South of the United States, proslavery articulations emphasized more strongly the color-blind message that abolition portended *social* upheaval. Proslavery polemicists in the United States characteristically added that emancipation portended specifically *racial* upheaval. The Lower South slavocracy compared blacks to orangutans and gorillas. Such barbarians, went the ugly argument, would revert to African cannibalism if freed.

But though this argument for *black* slavery was almost always front and center, a few proslavery theorists wrought the final uniquely U.S. rationale: Not "mere Negro" slavery but slavery per se was especially right in a republic, regardless of its special rightness for blacks. This color-blind aspect of the U.S. proslavery argument reaffirmed the Latin American emphasis on social upheaval and added an emphasis on political upheaval. Abolition would unhinge not just the society but also the republic, according to the peculiarly U.S. version of color-blind proslavery.

This nonracial proslavery argument reversed Jefferson's racist antislavery thesis. Early experience in despotism over blacks, Jefferson had argued, would corrupt republican leaders of whites. Defenders of color-blind paternalism countered that the plantation system trained the best men to command lesser blacks and thus to command lesser whites. Inferiors of any age or sex, class or color, needed patriarchal direction, lest children revolt from parents, wives leave husbands, lower classes assault upper classes, and especially lest patriarchal republics degenerate into depraved mobocracies.

These, then, were the prime ideological contestants on the issue of slavery in the mid-nineteenth-century United States: antislavery moderates, who would abolish slavery only if free blacks were deported; antislavery extremists, who denounced the black-removal condition; advocates for race-based slavery, who denounced freedom for blacks; and advocates for slavery per se, who would extend paternal authority beyond blacks to whites of lesser status, partly to salvage patriarchal republicanism. This ideological pattern, when laid over the geographical pattern of slaveholding locations in the United States, indicates how majoritarian democracy could menace the Lower South minority. The color-blind argument that slaveholders must rule nonslaveholders outraged the southern (and northern) nonslaveholding majority, as western Virginians had shown in 1832. The far more politic (and thus far more frequent) color-based argument that slaveholders must control blacks played into the rigid racism that everywhere differentiated the U.S. slavery controversy from other New World varieties.

But racist ideology remained a fragile basis for universal proslavery opinion. American whites in areas with few or no slaves preferred to live among no blacks at all. The race-based argument that blacks must be enslaved would thus become academic to Middle and Border South moderates if they thought their region's blacks could be removed somewhere else, including to the Lower South. Proslavery persuasion, in short, could not permanently consolidate the South's quasi-consolidated northern extremities. How, then, could Lower South zealots banish antislavery opinion from those vulnerable hinterlands?

IV

THE MORE REPUBLICAN U.S. slavocracy ironically outdid their less republican Latin American counterparts in eradicating antislavery opinion. Inside Spanish-owned Cuba, the Old World metropolitan authority, not the New World provincial slaveholders, usually dictated which opinion was to be silenced. Inside quasi-republican Brazil, where slaveholders constantly argued antislavery with one another, the ruling class could hardly silence its own debate. Discussion thus raged uncontested in Rio de Janeiro, the heart of the Coffee Kingdom. In U.S. areas with heavy slave populations, in contrast, local lynch mobs violently repressed supposedly incendiary discussion. American republicanism, in the black-belt South, meant that all ideas could compete in the open—except antislavery.

Local closure of antislavery discussion, however, could not transcend its local basis of legitimacy. Democratic agitation most menaced the Border South with fewer slaves, not the Lower South with more; and according to southern dogma, each neighborhood could police only itself. No slaveholders' mob could lynch a man inside a nonslaveholders' community, and no Lower South mob could violate Border South white dissenters.

Nor could Border South whites altogether deter their most threatening black dissenters—fugitive slaves. Group insurrectionists in the United States, though momentarily more terrifying than individual runaways, were less numerous. They were also less threatening, for whites knew that slave conspirators had few guns and some potential turncoats. In contrast, individual slaves, when they escaped without telling another black, could not initially be betrayed and could liberate themselves before the master could react. A solitary slave could most easily reach the North from the Border South, as Maryland's Frederick Douglass, the most famous fugitive slave, demonstrated. Although less than 1 percent of Border South slaves annually escaped to the North, their loss cost their masters over \$100,000; and if more Frederick Douglasses freed themselves, more Border South slaveholders might cash in their investments at Lower South slave auctions before still more blacks could flee. Then Border South

white moderates, whom Lower South extremists could neither convince nor lynch, might agitate harder for further removal of blacks.

Thus fugitives achieved more than their own freedom in the seemingly apolitical act of running away from masters (and from millions of enslaved brethren). The runaways advanced the political process that led to war and emancipation. Particularly Border South fugitives illuminated the slavocracy's geographic area of weakness—an illumination that provoked border masters into initiating Union-shattering political controversies. The slaveholders' political answer to border fugitives lay in the national forum, for only national laws could consolidate the line between South and North, as well as the barrier between slavery and free democratic discourse.

The electoral numbers might seem to have forbidden slaveholders from wielding national governmental power to deter border fugitives or otherwise consolidate their outposts. During pre-Civil War controversies, around 70 percent of U.S. whites lived outside the Slave South, and around 70 percent of southern white families did not own slaves. In those overwhelming numbers lay the slaveholders' potential peril. But the democratic system, as ever both threatening and empowering for a besieged minority, long enabled the master class to protect its borderlands and dominate Yankee majorities.

The federal Constitution provided the minority's most obvious defensive weapon. Abolitionists often conceded that the Constitution protected slavery, not least because it authorized Congress to pass fugitive slave laws. The Constitution also contained many restrictions on majority antislavery action, including the ultimate one: a forbidding amendment process. Three-fourths of the states have to agree on a constitutional amendment before it becomes operative. If all fifteen slaveholding states had voted against any future emancipation amendment, the free-labor states would have had to swell from 18 to 45 and the Union from 31 to 60 states before abolitionists could have triumphed by this route. Moreover, if Texas had split itself into five slave states, as Congress authorized it to do any time after its

admission to the Union in 1845, the resulting 19 slave states could not have been outvoted on a constitutional amendment until a 76-state union had been achieved. Armed with these numbers, the Slavepower minority apparently could stand forever behind unamendable constitutional bulwarks.

Proslavery forces accordingly appealed constantly to constitutional prohibition of majoritarian impositions. John C. Calhoun's doctrine of the concurrent majority took this dogma of "majorities-shall-not" to its logical extreme. Calhoun asserted that every minority must unanimously concur before a numerical majority could pass constitutional law. In 1832, Calhoun's state, South Carolina, transformed this logic into action. In the so-called Nullification Controversy, South Carolina declared the national numerical majority's protective tariff null and void in that state. Only the Compromise Tariff of 1833 stopped President Andrew Jackson from militarily imposing the countervailing postulate: When majorities decide, minorities must obey.

By the 1840s, Calhoun had come to see proslavery utility in Jackson's majoritarian postulate, for the nullification dogma of majorities-shall-not provided an arguably useless constitutional protection. Unless a congressional majority, for example, provided coercive mechanisms to enforce fugitive slave laws, Yankee rescuers of slaves could raid the Border South and flout the Constitution's fugitive slave clause. Then slaveholders in the four Border South states might sell their slaves to the Lower South. Were the 15 slave states to shrink to 11, an antislavery constitutional amendment could be enacted against slave states' wishes in a not-so-far-off 44-state Union, instead of in an incredibly distant 60-state or impossibly distant 76-state Union.

This potential Border South problem illustrated the slaveholders' provokingly small margin for error. Totally to control $\frac{1}{5}$ of slaveholders' territory and largely to control the other $\frac{4}{5}$ of their world would have been a miracle in any other New World slaveholding regime. But U.S. slaveholders, unlike Latin American counterparts, were seeking to stonewall the Age of Emancipation, and the singular effort would fail if the slaveholders' large

degree of control over their most vulnerable four states weakened. In part for that reason, southern extremists, including Calhoun, came to eschew the doctrine of federal hands off slavery and to urge that federal hands be heavily laid on, especially in the borderlands, to protect the slaveholders' interests there. National majorities must annex Texas on the Lower South's flank, admit Kansas on the Border South's edge, and ensure the return of fugitive slaves who escaped over any border.

Two more empowerments of the southern minority long enabled slaveholders to maneuver congressional majorities into fortifying southern outposts. First, the Constitution let the slaveholding states count three out of five slaves, in addition to all whites, when the number of southern congressmen and presidential electors was calculated. Thus in 1860 the Slave South, containing 30 percent of the nation's white citizens, had 36 percent of the nation's congressmen and presidential electors. That extra power (which had first prompted the coining of the word *Slavepower*) turned southern defeat into victory on key occasions, including the election of Virginia's Thomas Jefferson over Massachusetts's John Adams to the presidency in 1800, the Missouri Controversy, the Gag Rule Controversy, and the Kansas-Nebraska Controversy.

Second, national political parties gave a 30 percent popular minority with a 36 percent congressional minority the leverage to secure another 14 percent or more of congressional votes. Especially the dubiously titled Democratic party became a bulwark of the slavocracy. The party could be entitled "democratic" only in the way the American Revolution could be called socially revolutionary: if white men alone counted as Americans. Just as the Founding Fathers' principal emancipation policy, antislavery conditional on black removal, commenced a non-revolutionary crawl toward black freedom, so the Democratic party's leading ideology, egalitarian democracy for white men only, consolidated undemocratic dominion over Native Americans, blacks, and women. Andrew Jackson's agenda included enslaving blacks, dominating females, removing Native Americans from land coveted by whites, and treating as equals only

white male adults. Jackson's egalitarianism, for white males only, won him huge majorities in the Lower South but progressively smaller majorities at every step northward and fewest majorities in New England. That voting distribution gave the Democratic party a majority control in the nation and Southerners a majority control in the party. Thus when slavery controversies emerged in national politics, Southern Democrats could use the leverage of the nation's usually dominant party to demand that Northern Democrats help consolidate the slavocracy's frontiers.

A powerful minority of southern reactionaries, gathered around Calhoun in South Carolina and eastern Virginia, usually remained aloof from the Democratic party. They espoused the most extreme proslavery argument, that patriarchy should rule not only blacks but all poorer persons. They scorned American electioneering with its, so they thought, party demagogues appealing to the passions of white plebeians. These eighteenth-century-style aristocratic republicans feared even the southern-dominated Democratic party. They doubted that southern spoilsmen would insist that northern spoilsmen support extreme proslavery legislation. They prophesied instead that demagogical Northern Democrats would persuade demagogical Southern Democrats to dilute proslavery legislation. Then all Democrats would secure national electoral triumphs and patronage feasts.

Calhoun suspected the Whig party even more. He knew that while Democrats won in the South more often than in the North, Whigs won in the North more often than in the South. Thus though Southerners held the balance of power inside the Democracy, Northerners held the balance of power inside Whiggery. Worse, the Border South's most popular politician, Henry Clay, favored Jefferson-style antislavery, conditional on deporting black freedmen. According to Clay's utopian scenario, Border South moderates would edge away from Lower South extremists, fuse with northern antislavery moderates in the Whig party, and secure national funding for removal of blacks.

If national politics were to reverse Clay's preferred course, Southern Democrats had to insist that Northern Democrats

support the fullest proslavery protection. Southern Whigs also had to repel the Northern Whigs' slightest conditional antislavery overture. To goad southern waverers toward maintaining the necessary intransigence, proslavery warriors possessed yet another empowering gift from a democratic political system. When a besieged democratic society fears attack from outside and softness within, crusaders demand that trimmers prove their loyalty. The nineteenth-century cry that Southerners must not be soft on slavery, like the twentieth-century cry that Americans must not be soft on Communism, aimed at shaming private doubters into public displays of solidarity. Then a unanimous South might force the national parties to back proslavery laws.

Southern politics periodically became a three-ring loyalty circus. Southern Democrats accused Southern Whigs of treasonous alliances with antislavery Yankees. The accusers had a point. Northern Whigs, unlike Northern Democrats, composed the majority in their party, and they would never compromise on slavery-related matters. Southern Whigs, in retaliation, accused Southern Democrats of disloyally compromising on proslavery laws. These accusers also had a point. To secure Northern Democrats' proslavery votes, Southern Democrats often had to compromise a little. Calhounite aristocratic republicans meanwhile damned Southerners in both egalitarian republican parties for disloyally compromising the South.

Ironically, northern extremists were southern extremists' best allies in these loyalty contests. Garrison's righteous denunciations, aimed at all who opposed unconditional emancipation, damned all Southerners, whether they hoped to remove or to retain slaves. Southern moderates, enraged at being called sinners, passionately joined proslavery extremists in resenting the slur on their honor. On the subject of Yankee holier-than-thouism, Henry Clay sounded like John C. Calhoun.

Southern loyalty contests worked such "democratic" magic most effectively in Washington, D.C. Back home, Lower South extremists and Border South compromisers lived hundreds of miles apart. But in Washington, they crowded into the same

boardinghouses. Here Yankees called Southerners sinners to their faces, and any Southerner who cherished his self-esteem and honor, went the tribal cry, must show the colors. In such an atmosphere, when Lower South militants demanded the Border South's support for slavery's expansion, the less militant Southerners usually felt compelled to go along. When border slaveholders demanded federal protection, the Lower South always went along. When a united South demanded proslavery legislation, Northern Democrats usually acquiesced, lest their party, their nation, and their national political aspirations be damaged. But Northern Democrats' appeasement of minority demands instead put the National Democratic party, the Union, majoritarian republicanism, and the appeasers' northern re-election prospects at ever-greater risk.

V

THE GAG RULE CONTROVERSY, the first national slavery crisis after Garrison's emergence, introduced the deadly process. In 1835, antislavery zealots petitioned Congress to abolish slavery in Washington, D.C. The petitions inadvertently demonstrated that abolitionists constituted a fringe group outside the northern mainstream. Only a tiny fraction of Northerners signed the appeals, and a large number of signers were women, barred from the electorate.

Nevertheless, the petitioners reshaped national mainstream slavery politics. Their Garrisonian tone, insulting to Southerners, would have been counterproductive in Latin American countries, where slaveholders and abolitionists often negotiated gradual manumissions and free-womb laws. But in a U.S. world where Lower South extremists rejected any form of gradualism, the Garrisonian holier-than-thou polemics evoked a violent southern response. That provocative response shook northern complacency about the slavery issue more than any abolitionist could.

The slaveholders' provocative demand was that petitions for congressional action against slavery must be barred from congressional deliberations. Antislavery must not be discussed in

secret committees, much less publicly. To justify this repression of democratic debate, Southerners emphasized that congressional discussions might swell northern antislavery sentiment, increase the Upper South's distaste for the institution, incite slave insurrection and flight, and rob Southerners of that self-esteem and pride necessary to defend themselves. By attempting to gag congressional debate, Southerners tried to impose on the nation their regional version of republicanism: all ideas, *except* antislavery, were open to discussion.

Northerners responded that republicanism would lie in ruins unless *all* ideas could be debated. Representative republicanism especially would become a mockery, said Northerners, unless citizens could request that their representatives discuss whether slavery, an arguably antirepublican institution, should exist in the republic's capital city. The southern gag rule tactic, an irrelevant strategy in largely undemocratic Latin America, thus immediately produced the key non-Latin American question: Were slavery for blacks and democratic procedures for whites compatible? From that question, an otherwise rather isolated abolitionist movement would spread in the North, and the U.S. slavery controversy would assume its irrepressible—and non-Latin American—form.

In the Gag Rule Controversy as ever afterward, Southern Whigs, Southern Democrats, and Calhounites competed to secure the most thoroughgoing protection of slavery, whatever the North's understanding of democratic niceties. That southern competition escalated the pressure on Southerners' northern party allies. In 1836, Northern Democrats, exhorted by the southern majority in their party, agreed to enact a gag rule after they had watered it down. Northern Whigs, in the majority in their party, denounced any gag rule, watered down or not. Southern Whigs, unable to secure proslavery legislation, scoffed that the Democracy's watered-down gag rule was ineffective. Calhounites, opposing all national parties, condemned all southern compromisers as disloyal. Southern Democrats, now besieged from all southern sides as soft on the issue, subsequently demanded tighter gag rules. Northern

Democrats succumbed, but with ever-increasing resentments, in ever-smaller numbers, and at ever-greater risk of losing northern support.

The most airtight of the Democratic party's gag rules, passed in 1840, forbade the House of Representatives from receiving, much less considering, antislavery petitions. To the embarrassment of Southern Whigs, the Northern Whigs, led by Massachusetts's ex-president John Quincy Adams, refused to be gagged. Adams relentlessly attacked Northern Democrats as the Slavepower's slaves. The issue, he said, was not black slavery but white republicanism. The minority South must not rule the majority North. The slaveholding minority must not gag republican citizens. A viable republic must allow all ideas to be discussed. Northern Democrats must represent the majority North, sustain white men's democracy, and repeal the minority South's antidemocratic gag rule.

In December 1844, Northern Democrats finally acted to protect their home base. By voting down all gag rules, after eight years of caving in to ever-tighter gags, they signaled that the southern minority could push Northerners only so far. This denouement of the Gag Rule Controversy also signaled that northern and southern antiparty extremists had unintentionally collaborated to weaken their mutual foe: national party moderates. Just as the Garrisonians' antisouthern insults had helped southern extremists rally moderate Southern Democrats, so proslavery dichards' antirepublican procedure had helped northern extremists rally moderate Northern Democrats.

Without inadvertent aid from Southrons and when agitating about just black men's rights, Garrisonian polemicists had converted only a tiny minority of the very conservative, highly racist antebellum Northerners to crusade against slaves' antirepublican plight. But with the aid of provoked Southerners and when agitating about white men's rights too, abolitionists had raised northern consciousness about slavery's inherently antirepublican nature. By demanding a gag on the discussion of that one issue, slaveholders had confirmed one aspect of the abolitionists' case: The preservation of southern-style black slavery meant

the annihilation of northern-style white republicanism. These dynamics of northern consciousness-raising ultimately forced those key northern appeasers, Northern Democrats, to join Northern Whigs and northern extremists in opposing all gags, just as the dynamics of southern consciousness-raising forced southern moderates to join southern extremists in seeking ever-tighter gags. Then neither centrist national party could find a middle position between the two sections' different versions of republicanism. And in any democracy, the erosion of the vital center can be the first step toward civil war.

VI

IN 1844, AN OMINOUS second step was taken. Southern Democrats surrendered on the gag rules, partly to press Northern Democrats to support the annexation of the then-independent Republic of Texas. Slaveholders' fight to save slavery in Washington, D.C., could and would successfully continue, whether Congress debated abolitionists' petitions or not. Meanwhile, Southern Democrats thought that they must immediately annex Texas, of whose population only 20 percent was enslaved in the early 1840s. That was a Border South percentage of slaves. But this time, the borderland with a low proportion of slaves abutted the slaveholders' southwestern flank, thick with slaves. A Texas republic with relatively few slaves, Southerners worried, might submit to English antislavery blandishments in exchange for diplomatic protection. Then an emancipated Texas, under English control, would beckon fugitive slaves from the Lower South. In contrast, an annexed Texas, under U.S. control, would consolidate the Lower South frontier. In early 1844, Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur, a Virginia Whig, started negotiations toward an annexation treaty. In April, after Upshur's death, John C. Calhoun completed the negotiations and President John Tyler, another Virginia Whig, asked the Senate to ratify the treaty. In June, when the administration could not secure the necessary two-thirds majority for ratification, Tyler and Calhoun urged Congress to admit the proposed slave state by a simple majority of each house.

A Southern Whig administration had proposed a border safeguard. But as usual, only the National Democratic party could pass prosouthern legislation. Northern Whigs, as usual, denounced the southern proposal. Southern Democrats, however, induced reluctant Northern Democrats to replace the lukewarm annexationist New Yorker, Martin Van Buren, with the strongly annexationist Tennessean, James K. Polk, as the party's presidential candidate in 1844. After Polk won the election, Southern Democrats, now pressured by Southern Whigs to do still more for the South, successfully insisted that reluctant Northern Democrats not only admit Texas to the Union but also allow the annexed state, any time in the future, to divide itself into five slave states. Four years later, a resentful Van Buren bolted the Democratic party, arguing that white men's majoritarian democracy must be protected from minority dictation. Van Buren ran for president on the Free-Soil ticket, hoping to stop slavery from spreading into federal territories.

At midcentury, while Van Buren sought to contain the Slavepower in the South, Southerners sought to stop the flight of slaves to the North. In 1850, border Southerners proposed a new fugitive slave law, especially designed to protect the South's northernmost hinterlands from northern slave raiders. The proposed law contained notorious antirepublican features, as the North (but not the South) defined republicanism. Black fugitives were denied a jury trial, as they were in the South (but not in the North). Any nonslaveholder could be compelled to join a slave-chasing posse in the manner of a southern patrol—an outrageous requirement in the North.

In the face of the southern minority's latest attempt to impose on the nation southern-style republicanism, Northern Whigs again balked. But again Northern Democrats reluctantly acquiesced, and again the minority South, using the National Democratic party as a congressional fulcrum, had gained protection of vulnerable frontiers. When Southerners subsequently attempted to extradite captured fugitives from the North, the new procedures returned the alleged slaves 90 percent of the time. But in the remaining cases, northern mobs blocked the return of the

escapes. The well-publicized stories of rare fugitive slave rescues dramatized Garrison's most telling lesson: Southern-style power over blacks damaged northern-style republics for whites.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 drove the lesson home. Once again a vulnerable slaveholders' hinterland, this time the Border South's Missouri, with only 10 percent of its population enslaved, demanded protection of its frontier. Proslavery Missourians urged that slaveholders be allowed to enter the uninhabited territory to their west, Kansas, if Congress opened the area for settlement. Missouri's senator David R. Atchison claimed that if free laborers controlled Kansas, Missouri slaves would flee to Kansas sanctuaries; the number of Missouri's still-scarce antislavery politicians would increase; and worried Missouri slaveholders would sell their slaves southward. The erosion of Missouri slavery would then spread east to Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware, toppling slavery in the South's northern outposts.

Before any citizen could come to the federal area west of Missouri, Congress would have to authorize migration. Before slaveholding citizens could come, Congress would have to repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had prohibited slavery in all Louisiana Purchase territories north of the 36° 30' line. That man-made geographic boundary continued westward from the latitude of Missouri's southern border, thus barring slaveholders from living west of Missouri, once Congress allowed settlement there. Stephen A. Douglas, the Northern Democrats' leader in the post-Van Buren era, warned Southerners that repeal of the Missouri Compromise would raise "a hell of a storm." But most Border South Democrats adamantly demanded repeal, the Lower South rallied to the cause, and another borderite, Southern Whig Senator Archibald Dixon of Kentucky, insisted that Southern Democrats go all the way for slavery.

Douglas, although a Northern Democrat, could not withstand this latest competition within the South to be most southern. Above all, he wished to open the Kansas-Nebraska area for white settlers, an objective that would achieve his own goals: a revitalized Democratic party, its presidential nomination, and a West open to white entrepreneurs' economic devel-

opment, especially railroads (including one in which Douglas owned shares). But not enough southern congressmen would vote for a Kansas-Nebraska bill, inviting settlers to come, unless the bill honored *their* anti-Missouri Compromise proposal that slaveholding and nonslaveholding settlers alike be permitted. Their stance, they pointed out to Douglas, sustained *his* Popular Sovereignty principle. According to Douglas's dogma, local populations, not distant congressmen, should have sovereignty over local institutions. Then Washington congressmen of 1820 should not have dictated Kansans' labor arrangements in 1854; and this misguided bar to settler sovereignty and to slaveholding settlers must be repealed.

So Douglas, pressed to repeal a Missouri Compromise measure that violated his principles, agreed to sponsor a Kansas-Nebraska bill that sustained Popular Sovereignty. No pre-Civil War moment was more revealing. Douglas was as convinced as any Southerner that supposedly superior whites should evict supposedly inferior Native Americans from the West and that the enslavement of supposedly inferior blacks was no Northerner's moral business. Yet Southern Democrats had to pressure Douglas to be Douglas, for their shared program bore the taint of Slavepower domination. And this astute majoritarian politician did not want to be labeled a tool of the minority.

Nevertheless, he had to risk the noxious designation. What became known as *his* Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed by a Douglas-rallied National Democratic party plus a majority of Southern Whigs, repealed the Missouri Compromise ban on slavery in Kansas Territory, located due west of Missouri, and in Nebraska Territory, located due north of Kansas. Any settler with any form of property could come to these two territories, declared the law, and the majority of settlers in each territory would decide which institutions should thereafter prevail. This most important of all mid-nineteenth-century American laws authorized slaveholding migrants to move to Kansas, seek to make it a slave state, and thus protect the Border South's western flank, just as Texas Annexation had fortified the Lower South's western frontier and the Fugitive Slave Law guarded the Border South's northern

extremities. Douglas's law also invited the Democrats' northern opponents to claim that the Slavepower minority, in its anxiety to quarantine border slavery from neighboring democratic currents, had again bullied a congressional majority in the manner of an imperious dictator.

In 1854, in the perspective of the Slavepower's influence on Douglas and on the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the uncertainty of the Border South's long-run commitment to slavery hardly seemed disastrous. Although Border South vulnerabilities existed, Southerners worked to overcome them. The resulting national legal antidotes seemed promising. The Kansas borderlands were open to slaveholders. Border South conditional antislavery advocates rarely campaigned and almost never collaborated with Northerners. A few spectacular rescues aside, nine times out of ten northern communities returned captured slave fugitives to the South in compliance with the Fugitive Slave Law. While neither proslavery polemics nor vigilante mobs had totally consolidated the South, national laws had apparently secured tolerably safe Border South outposts, to say nothing of an ultra-safe Texas hinterland. Majoritarian democracy and the National Democratic party guarded an enslaving minority's frontiers.

VII

IN THE NEXT SIX YEARS the northern majority would revoke the minority's domination of the republic, making problems inside the southern outposts more threatening. A similar phenomenon would happen during the Civil War. Halfway through that war, as halfway down the road to disunion, the slaveholders' internal world would seem well enough consolidated and their external attackers well enough contained. But in the antebellum years after 1854, as in the wartime years after 1863, disagreements inside the slavocracy would seem more lethal as northern assaults became more alarming.

In post-1854 politics, the South's most vulnerable instrument was the national party. Long useful in passing the slaveholders' favorite legislation, it had lately buckled under the weight of the minority's attempts to seek ever-more domination

over the majority. Northern Democrats' resentment of the minority's demands had led to the 1844 defeat of the gag rule and to Van Buren's 1848 revolt. Despite Van Buren's defection, most Northern Democrats remained in the fold, and the National Democracy remained largely intact.

In the early 1850s, however, the National Whig party collapsed. Until the middle of the century, Lower South Whigs had hoped that Northern Whigs would relent on slavery-related matters. But after Northern Whigs said no to the Fugitive Slave Law, no to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and, all too often, yes to the rescue of fugitive slaves, the Southern Democrats' charge rang all too true: Southerners who cooperated with Yankee Whigs might be secretly soft on slavery. After the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Whiggery lost all credibility in the Lower South.

Whiggery simultaneously lost some northern credibility. Old Whig rhetoric did not sufficiently convey many Yankees' twin indignations in 1854: hostility toward new immigrants and loathing for the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The anti-immigrant nativist impulse had been eroding northern Whiggery even before the Kansas-Nebraska Act finished off Lower South Whiggery. Since the early 1840s, an unprecedented wave of European migrants had begun arriving in the North—some 300,000 annually. The North's predominantly Protestant natives, usually English in origin and often Whiggish in politics, considered the newcomers too Irish or German, too Catholic, and too enraptured with the southern-dominated Democratic party. A fusion of northern immigrants and southern slaveholders, many native Yankees thought, bid fair to destroy American republicanism, using as the agent of destruction the deplorably named *Democratic* party.

A countervailing fusion swiftly transpired. Northern campaigns against immigrants and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, originally separate matters, partly funneled into one deliberately named *Republican* party in time for the presidential election of 1856. The Republicans' first presidential campaign almost swept enough northern votes to win the White House, despite the lack of southern votes. Some Northerners especially welcomed most

Republicans' secondary mission: to serve free laborers' economic interests. Republicans often saw southern and immigrant economic threats as similar. Impoverished immigrants could displace Yankee wage earners by accepting low wages, just as affluent slaveholders could displace Yankee farmers by making Kansas a slave territory.

But most Republicans considered free republican government more endangered than free labor capitalism. Here again, they saw immigrants and Southerners as related perils. Immigrants, not educated in American schools, supposedly voted as the pope or Democratic city bosses instructed, just as Northern Democrats, swollen in power by immigrant support, supposedly voted as the Slavepower instructed. In confronting these intertwined political dangers, Republicans emphasized containment more than abolition. Nativists in the 1850s did not usually urge abolition of immigration in order to save American jobs. Rather, they sought to contain foreigners from voting for many years in order to save the American republic. So too, Republican campaigners did not usually emphasize abolition of slavery, with or without expulsion of free blacks. Instead they usually stressed that the spread of slavery to the new territories must be contained, lest the slaveholding minority further control the national majority.

The events of the mid-1850s enhanced the longstanding northern suspicions that slaveholders menaced American white majoritarianism. In 1856, South Carolina's congressman Preston Brooks, by beating Massachusetts's senator Charles Sumner unconscious on the Senate floor, recalled southern attempts to gag congressional debate. Simultaneously, southern vigilantes, by marauding in Bleeding Kansas neighborhoods, reminded Yankees of lynch mobs in southern neighborhoods. In 1857-58, Southerners, by attempting to impose Kansas as a slave state on the northern congressional majority, rekindled memories of the imposition of Texas annexation. Then also Southern Democrats had handed aspiring Northern Democrats such as Martin Van Buren an infuriating ultimatum: Give us our slave state or forfeit your national political ambitions.

Republicans' drive to contain the imperious masters' alleged travesties against white men's republicanism shrewdly seized on Garrison's popular denunciations of sinning despots, while just as shrewdly shedding his unpopular demand for immediate abolition. Republicans often called absolute power over blacks a sin against Christianity, against free-labor ideology, and against the Declaration of Independence. But their anti-Slavepower rhetoric made minority domination of white republics the intolerable crime. Republicans would confine slaveholders to the now-existing slave states, like rats in a cage. Then the Slavepower's undemocratic domination would poison neither the free-labor economy nor republican deliberations in the nation and its territories.

Occasionally, Republicans such as Abraham Lincoln talked of probing inside the poisonous cage to secure the ultimate extinction of slavery. But this sporadic Republican rhetoric remained vague on *how* party leaders meant to achieve abolition. On the few occasions when they dropped hints about how the confinement of slavery to the South would escalate into emancipation, the Lincolns speculated about voluntary southern collaboration. They would impose nothing on the sinning region. Rather, they would help Southerners remove blacks, probably first from the Border South and with federal funding for deportation.

This Republican rhetoric showed how much (and how little) William Lloyd Garrison had triumphed. Lincoln's mainstream rhetoric appropriated Garrison's extremist vocabulary about southern sinfulness, his conception that free-labor and slave-labor economies were antithetical, his demand for inclusion of blacks in the Declaration of Independence, his hopes for slavery's extinction, and his detestation of slaveholders' imperiousness. Still, Republicans' condemnation of the Slavepower's tyrannizing over whites, not Garrison's condemnation of slaveholders' tyrannizing over blacks, had been most responsible for spreading moral outrage about slaveholders from the northern extreme to the northern mainstream. The average Northerner rejected Slavepower imposition on *him*. But most Northerners were as fearful as ever that federally imposed abolition would break up

the Union, jeopardize national commerce, and lead northern blacks to demand *their* egalitarian rights.

The Republicans' resulting caution outraged Garrison. He loathed Lincoln's political formula: Always emphasize containment of the Slavepower and occasionally add a vague hope of slavery's ultimate extinction. Garrison equally detested Lincoln's emphasis on the slow transformation of public opinion North and South, even if abolition was delayed a hundred years. Moreover, Lincoln's program for achieving the delayed extinction of slavery was exactly the one Garrison had furiously denounced in 1831. Lincoln, like Henry Clay and Harriet Beecher Stowe, was back with Thomas Jefferson, advocating the removal of slavery *and* freed blacks from the republic with federal funds—and seeking southern consent before doing either.¹²

This strategy, if anathema to Garrison, was exactly the highly conditional form of antislavery gradualism that southern extremists most feared. The Border South deplored immediate emancipation without removal of blacks. But the offer of a northern hand to help consenting whites transport blacks gradually out of the South—that could be seductive among black-hating Border South nonslaveholders. In the face of the Republicans' clarity about containing southern sinners like lepers and their hints about helping southern softhearts cure a black plague, the Lower South response escalated. At the southern extreme, particularly in South Carolina, secessionists wanted out of this hateful Union, not territorial expansion within it. But the far more numerous southern moderates preferred to stay in the Union if they could expand their territory, particularly the territory bordering on their vulnerable outposts.

The Southern Democratic majority on the U.S. Supreme Court provided the clearest protection for slaveholders' right to expand into the nation's territories. In its notorious Dred Scott decision (1857), the Court pronounced the Republican party's containment program unconstitutional. Congress could not bar slavery from national territory, ruled the Court, for slaves were property and seizure of property violated the due process clause of the Constitution. Alarmed Republicans replied (and apparently be-

lieved) that a second Dred Scott decision would follow. Since citizens of one state had the rights and immunities of citizens of another state, the Court allegedly would next empower slaveholders to take (human) property into northern states!

If Republicans needed post-Dred Scott evidence that Southerners meant to extend slavery into northern latitudes, southern insistence on admitting Kansas as a slave state in 1857–58 seemed to provide it. The Kansas-Nebraska Act had allowed both Southerners and Northerners to come to the area, with the majority of settlers to decide on an eventual state's constitution and its labor arrangements. Three years later, when Kansans applied for admission to the Union as a state, northern settlers predominated. But the minority of southern settlers demanded admission as a slave state anyway, despite the majority of Kansans' frenzied objections. This time, Stephen A. Douglas defied the Southerners, for they were asking him to abjure his Popular Sovereignty principle that the majority of settlers should determine their own institutions. Despite Douglas's protests, the U.S. Senate voted 33–25 to admit Kansas as a slave state, with most Northern Democrats casting their usual prosouthern vote. The House then rejected a proslavery Kansas, 120–112.

Southerners, enraged at their first congressional loss on a major slavery issue since gag rule times, principally blamed the 40 percent of House Northern Democrats, admirers of Douglas, who had voted against them. Two years later, at the first of two 1860 Democratic National Conventions, Lower South Democrats insisted that the party platform contain anti-popular-sovereignty language on slaveholders' rights in the territories. Douglas and his supporters balked, just as Martin Van Buren had balked at southern control of the party during the Texas episode. But this time, when the key Northern Democrat said no to Slavepower rule, Lower South convention delegates walked out. At the subsequent Democratic convention, Northern Democrats barred those who had left from returning as accredited delegates.

With the split of the National Democratic party, the minority South lost its longstanding leverage to secure majority laws protective of its hinterlands. The need never seemed greater. When

the House of Representatives rejected a proslavery Kansas, six Upper South ex-Whigs voted with the North. Had they voted with the South, the slaveholders' 120-112 defeat would have been a 118-114 triumph. The episode again illuminated one reason for southern defensive maneuverers' frantic quality: Even a small amount of southern internal disunity could destroy slaveholders' national dominion. To control all but six of 91 Slave South congressmen would have been a degree of dominance unthinkable in any other New World slavocracy. But the minority's control of 93 percent of its regime was not enough to impose Kansas on the majority. Only a little erosion at the fringes could undercut the slaveholders' chance, not found elsewhere in the New World, to bring an antislavery century to a standstill.

At the time the six deserters helped defeat a proslavery Kansas, other departures from proslavery solidarity arose. For many U.S. slaveholders, the most profitable expansion seemed to lie southward toward Latin America. Yet when southern adventurers sought to annex Nicaragua and Cuba, many South Carolina and Upper South slaveholders decried such Caribbean expansion as folly, indeed as piracy. More revealingly still, antebellum Southerners intemperately clashed over the fastest rising Lower South political movement of the 1850s, the crusade to reopen the African slave trade. Proponents of moving Africans to America wished to reverse southern thinking about population movement. Border Southerners should not advocate removal of African Americans from the civilized United States. Africans should instead be removed from the barbarism of the Dark Continent. So too, the Border South should not sell its too few slaves to the Lower South. Lower South slaveholders should instead buy slaves from Africa so that slaves could be kept up North.

Every southern region a permanent slavocracy! Every border Southerner a devotee of perpetual slavery! Reopening the African slave trade seemed to offer the most hopeful remedy yet for uncertain southern commitment. But hope swiftly gave way to a sinking realization: that instead of permanently fortifying a slightly shaky Border South, the proposed panacea drove the more northern and the more southern South further apart.

Border South masters denied that slavery would be bolstered in their region if Lower South masters could buy cheap Africans. Instead, the more northern South would find its slaves devalued and its slave sales ended; and then its rationale for complicity in slavery would evaporate.

More ominous still for Lower South slaveholders who wished to import Africans in the 1850s, the Border South preference for exporting African Americans grew stronger. From the perspective of those who wanted an all-white, all-free-labor South, slave sales had removed blacks from the Upper South too slowly. Thomas Jefferson, and after him Henry Clay, had suggested a faster solution: federally financed colonization to the Caribbean or Africa. Although these emancipation-and-removal schemes still inspired Upper South support, the post-nati Upper South heresy, popularized by Thomas Jefferson Randolph in the Virginia debate of 1832, grew in importance in the 1850s. Cassius Clay in Kentucky and Frank Blair, Jr., in Missouri, the two most politically powerful Border South heretics, campaigned in their respective states for a legislative decree of freedom for future-born slaves when these blacks reached a distant birthday. Like Randolph earlier, Blair and Clay cynically hoped that slaves would be sold southward before emancipating birthdays. Let Lower South masters pay to remove the Upper South's blacks!

Despite that enticement, Kentucky voters trounced Cassius Clay's bid for governor in 1851. St. Louis voters, however, sent Blair to Congress in the mid-1850s. Simultaneously, Maryland voters overwhelmed a slaveholders' counteroffensive designed to re-enslave free blacks. And in North Carolina, Hinton R. Helper's *Impending Crisis in the South: How To Meet It* was published in 1857. Helper urged the southern nonslaveholder majority to serve both its own economic interests and America's racial interests by deporting slaveholders' blacks. With this publication, the 1850s, not the 1830s, had become the Upper South's great age of dispute over removing slaves.

More important, in the 1850s for the first time, northern leaders threatened to make southern black-removal programs national in scope. Northern Republicans printed hundreds

of thousands of copies of Helper's emancipation-by-removal scheme. Did Republicans, many Southerners wondered, thereby hope to provoke a southern white lower-class revolt against the slaveholding class? Meanwhile, many Northern Republicans, including Lincoln, endorsed the Thomas Jefferson-Henry Clay colonization proposal. Did the Lincolns thereby seek a national collaboration between conditional antislavery moderates in the North and in the Upper South? Lincoln's hero, the Border South's Henry Clay, had dreamed of exactly that fusion in the now-expired Clay-Lincoln Whig party.

Such a post-Whig party collaboration across sectional lines could have a new partisan foundation. Although in the Lower South most ex-Whigs joined the Democrats, in the Upper South ex-Whigs formed a powerful Opposition party that defeated the Democracy in a number of elections. These Upper South Oppositionists, never happy about being de-Whigged, wished again to form a southern wing of a national party. They approached Northern Republicans. If Lincoln's party would cease its insulting condemnation of slavery, they would accept a fusion with Republicans on some black-removal platform. And that politically powerful advocate of black removal, St. Louis congressman Frank Blair, Jr., became a Republican; he helped secure 17,028 Missouri votes, 10 percent of the state's total, for Lincoln in 1860. In addition, 24 percent of Delaware voters cast their ballots for Lincoln.

Lincoln, who also disliked being de-Whigged, would have liked to build a national Whiggish party on this promising Border South foundation—a preference he later signaled by placing a couple of Border Southerners in his cabinet.¹³ But with no southern votes needed to gain the presidency, the biggest northern issue in the 1860 election remained the southern minority's domination of the white man's majoritarian republic. Upset over the recent southern triumph in the Dred Scott case and near-triumph on the Kansas issue, the majoritarian section now meant to rule like a majority. That determination could be seen in the Northern Democrats' rejection of the Lower South's demand for a proslavery platform at the party's conventions and

in the northern electorate's sweeping affirmation of Lincoln's leading message: that the *Republican* party must keep the South from destroying *republicanism*. Yet the question remained, after Lincoln's election in November 1860, would the southern minority now truly destroy the republic by withdrawing its consent to be ruled by the victorious majority?

VIII

BEFORE SOUTHERN SECESSIONISTS could escape the northern majority, they had to win over their own majority. If some Southwide Gallup poll had inquired whether Southerners wished to secede immediately after Lincoln's election, the secessionists' vote likely would have been down in the 25 percent range. In the Border South, where secessionists lost even after civil war began, 37 percent of all southern whites resided. Another 31 percent lived in the Middle South, where secessionists lost until civil war began. Even in the Lower South, a slim majority might have voted against secession had a Southwide referendum occurred immediately after Lincoln's election. In late November 1860, only Mississippi and Florida probably would have affirmed the expediency of secession, and only South Carolina assuredly would have done so.

The Southwide majority against disunion in November 1860 fed on conservatives' dread of revolution, on Southerners' patriotism as Americans, and on moderates' doubts that Lincoln could or would threaten slavery. Southern Unionists denounced the president-elect for declaring slavery immoral, for calling its spread to new territory unacceptable, and for terming its ultimate extinction desirable. But Lincoln conceded, Unionists pointed out, that the Constitution barred federal intervention in the South to force slavery's extinction. To re-emphasize this federal powerlessness, Lincoln in his inaugural address supported an unamendable constitutional amendment, already passed by Congress, that would have forever banned federal antislavery coercion in the South. But no constitutional amendment was needed, Unionists added. Lincoln's party did not have a majority in the Senate or in the House or on

the Supreme Court. If Lincoln nevertheless managed to act against slavery, the South could *then* secede. Why secede now over an uncertain northern menace, thereby subjecting slavery to certain menace in a civil war?

Secessionists retorted that a stealthy northern majority would initially let Southerners do the menacing. Southern politicians would form a wing of the Black Republican party, dedicated to agitating against slavery, especially in the Border South. South Carolina patricians, the most avid secessionists, considered all agitating parties dangerous. These aristocratic republicans had long taken the proslavery rationale beyond a vision of whites directing blacks. Theirs was a more universal paternalistic conception: The best men should direct lesser humans of all races. To them all national parties portended mobocratic republicanism. Patronage-hungry demagogues would stir up the masses and thus overwhelm disinterested paternalists.

In contrast, Lower South mainstream politicians beyond crusty South Carolina, having long happily participated in national parties, feared not democratic parties in general but a prospective Southern Republican party in particular. They uneasily recalled Frank Blair's delivery of 10 percent of Missourians to Lincoln in the election of 1860, Delaware's 24 percent vote for Lincoln, the more northern South's Opposition party's recent overtures to the Republicans, and Northern Republicans' publication of Helper's call for nonslaveholder war against slaveholders. They knew that Lincoln had patronage jobs at his disposal and that Border South leaders wanted them. They understood that Lincoln, like the Border South's hero, Henry Clay, carried on Thomas Jefferson's vision of emancipation with freedmen's removal financed by the federal government. Lincoln, in short, need not force abolition on the most northern South. He could instead encourage and bribe Border Southerners to agitate for their misty hope of, and his nebulous plan for, removing blacks from a whitened republic.

Nor, warned the secessionists, would Republican efforts for black removal be restricted to rallying a Border South *white* majority. Republicans would encourage slaves to flee the Border South.

With white support melting away and black slaves running away, border slaveholders would dispatch their human property to Lower South slave markets. Then nothing could deter a Border South Republican party. The Slave South, shrunk to 11 states or less and prevented from expanding into new territories, could only watch while northern free-labor states swelled from 18 to 33. In that 44-state Union, concluded secessionists, Republican emancipators would have the three-fourths majority to abolish slavery in 11 states by constitutional amendment.

Southern extremists meant to cancel that democratic drama before the staging began. They would not let northern-style republicanism, with all issues open for discussion, replace southern-style republicanism, in which debate about slavery was impermissible. They would not sit back and watch while a new president used patronage to forge a new centrist position on the forbidden subject. They would not allow Lincoln's method of antislavery, the slow transformation of public opinion, to operate within the South. They had long especially feared democratic agitation in the Border South, that nontropical vestige of seventeenth-century slaveholders' effort to defy tropical geography. Many of the Slavepower's aggressive defenses, including the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, had sought to keep Border South whites and Border South blacks separated from contamination by freedom.

Now Lincoln's and the Border South's favorite national solution to slavery—compensated emancipation conditional on federally financed black removal—might establish the most contaminating and indestructible vital center yet. Since gag rule times, southern and northern extremists had unintentionally collaborated to destroy centrist ideological positions and centrist national parties. After twenty years of slavery crises, the Democratic party could no longer find a middle position between that of southern moderates, enraged by Yankee insults, and that of northern moderates, enraged by proslavery ultimatums. But no extremist tactic in the Union might deter a new centrist program, institutionalized in a newly national Republican party. Cries of "traitor" would not deter Border South Republicans, for the region's numerous advocates of black

removal thought an all-white Border South exceedingly patriotic. Fear of losing southern elections would not deter conditional antislavery moderates, for Henry Clay Whiggery had done well in the Border South, and Lincoln's party figured to be a rebuilt Whiggish coalition. Furthermore, Border South demagogues could not feast on Lincoln's national patronage. After well-fed politicians started agitating, wouldn't Border South inhabitants agree to remove blacks at federal expense, or Border South masters sell out at Lower South purchasers' expense, especially if more and more of the region's slaves ran away?

For the first time, many Lower South slaveholders felt powerless to answer such questions. Their feeling of impotence rivaled that of Latin American colonists when European metropolitan centers abolished slavery and that of Brazilian coffee planters when sugar planters assaulted the institution. But if Lincoln's election seemed to revoke a democracy's unique invitation for slaveholders to control their fate, the U.S. republican system offered a final invitation for minority self-protection, unavailable in less democratic Latin America. The people of a single colony, the American Revolutionaries had declared, had a right to withdraw their consent to be governed. It was as if the Brazilian coffee provinces had a *right* to secede, which the sugar provinces might feel an obligation to defend.

A *right* of secession, held by a single one of the South's fifteen states! That right did empower a secessionist minority to force the southern majority's hand on the expediency of secession. But to force-feed secession to the antisecessionist majority, secessionists had to abort the southern Unionists' favorite idea: a region-wide southern convention, where a Southwide majority would veto immediate secession. Secessionists instead wanted the most secessionist state to call a convention to consider disunion. If the most secessionist state seceded, other southern state conventions would have to decide not whether secession was *expedient* but whether a seceded state could be denied its *right* of secession. Furthermore, other slave states might discern less expediency in remaining in the Union after several states with large slave populations had departed to form a proslavery confederacy.

The single-state secession strategy neatly countered Lincoln's supposed fusion strategy. Instead of the Union's president building a Republican party in southern buffer zones and drawing the Upper South away from slavery's Lower South base, secessionists would build a southern nation in the Lower South and drag the Upper South beyond Lincoln's patronage bribes. Or to use the modern metaphor, instead of slavery falling like the top row of a pile of dominoes, with the Border South and then the Middle South collapsing onto the Lower South, the Union would fall by secessionists' pulling out the lower row, with the Lower South and then the Middle South leaving the Border South no foundation for staying in the Union.

That was the secessionists' master plan, devised in private correspondence and carried out in public lockstep. On December 20, 1860, the secessionists' stronghold, South Carolina, withdrew its consent to Union. South Carolina's neighbor, Georgia, was wary of secession. But with its neighbor out, could Georgia stay in? After a brilliant internal debate, Georgia decided, narrowly, to join South Carolina. And so it went, neighbor following neighbor, throughout the Cotton South. By the time Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, the seven Lower South states had left the Union. But the eight Upper South states, containing the majority of southern whites, still opposed secession.

The balance of power changed in mid-April after the Civil War started. Now the more northern South had to decide not on secession per se but on whether to join a northern or a southern army. In making that decision, the Middle South affirmed that each state had the American right to withdraw its consent to be governed. These southern men in the middle also reaffirmed that Yankee extremists were more hateful than secessionist extremists. The Garrisonian insult, encompassing all Southerners who would not unconditionally and immediately emancipate, had long infuriated most Southerners. The Republican insult, encompassing all Southerners who sought to dominate or depart the Union, was equally enraging. To protect their self-respect and honor, Southerners usually felt compelled to unite

against taunting Yankees. That duty had so often drawn together a region otherwise partially disunited. In April 1861, when Lincoln sent reinforcements to federal troops in Charleston's harbor, the old tribal fury swept the Middle South. By May 1861, eleven angry southern states had departed the Union. In that fury, parallel to Republican rage over an allegedly anti-republican Slavepower, lies the solution to the largest apparent puzzle about secession: why 260,000 men, whatever their initial preference for Union, died for the Confederacy.

IX

THUS DID the secessionist minority of the no-longer-ruling southern minority escape the at-last-ruling northern majority. Thus did southern extremists move to abort the expected Republican attempt to rally a new Border South-northern national majority, with Lincoln's patronage supplying the organizational basis, with race removal providing the ideological basis, and with an ultimate constitutional amendment auguring the worst danger. But by moving outside a majoritarian Union's sway, the secessionist minority of the southern minority moved toward a more perilous rendezvous with majoritarianism's own requirement: the need to win men's minds and hearts. Considering the free-labor states' somewhat greater predominance of military power and considering northern determination to save majoritarian government from the southern minority, secession, to be effective, would have to sweep farther than the Middle South. Border Southerners would have to make common cause with secessionists rather than with Republicans.

Or to put the Confederacy's problem in the most revealing way, the secessionists, having secured a southern numerical majority, now had to rally a Calhoun-style concurrent majority: a concurrence of everyone. Now more than ever, the margin of error was thin for the only slaveholders in the New World who defied worldwide antislavery currents. The U.S. slavocracy, to prevail in its extraordinary Civil War gamble, had to control all Southerners, black and white. Several southern minorities could nullify the white majority in the eleven Confederate states, for

the North was passionately united in its eighteen free-labor states. Let the four Border South states refuse to secede from the Union; let western Virginia nonslaveholders secede from Virginia; let eastern Tennessee nonslaveholders desert Tennessee; let the slaves depart from the slaveholders and . . .

The sequels would fill the rest. Slave runaways, having initiated the fugitive slave controversies that helped lead to civil war, would join northern armies and help secure an emancipating triumph. So too Border Southerners, whose possible fusion with Yankees had helped fuel disunion, would unite with Black Republicans on the battlefields. But though much is fittingly democratic about fugitive slaves doing in slaveholders and about the conditional antislavery Border South doing in the unconditional proslavery Lower South, democrats can hardly cheer the spectacle. The coming of the American Civil War is a case study in democracy's limitations.

Only an especially convulsive internal issue could expose those limits. As the American antebellum experience shows, a democratic system can survive a very large degree of divisiveness. Such national issues as nativism, temperance, national banks, protective tariffs, women's rights, and religious freedom were settled peaceably. Nor did some singular aspects of U.S. culture, peculiar among the world's republics to these North Americans, destroy this democracy. The unusually constant stream of U.S. localistic elections, for example, did not lead to more electioneering agitation than a stable governing system could handle. Those localistic elections usually focused on resolvable local issues. In contrast, national presidential campaigns, occurring only every four years, focused increasingly on the only unresolvable issue, slavery. Nor did America's unusually strong encouragement of individualistic eccentricity destroy nationalizing institutions. The national political parties found a peaceable common ground on every issue involving white individuals' opportunities except slavery—and for a long while on that issue too.

The point is that agitation over slavery ultimately superseded all other agitations and alone could expose a democratic system's most deep-seated, most universal limits. Despite its cult of

majority rule, democracy is very susceptible to minority control. A minority that knows what it wants and knows how to manipulate the system will defeat a less determined majority every time. The impasse comes when a majority grows equally determined and the minority can not accept defeat. The problem is particularly explosive when the minority is a powerful ruling class and the dogma of government by consent permits imperious rulers to withdraw from the republic. In the United States, only the slavery issue called forth this sort of inflexible minority, determined to use every available power to rule supposedly barbaric blacks, assuredly infuriating outsiders, and uncertainly soft-hearted insiders. And in the New World, only the U.S. republican system swelled intransigent slaveholders with the illusion that they could command their own fate, whether by dominating or by departing a republic.

Lower South slaveholders exhausted all means of dominating before they departed. They tried ideological persuasion. That partly failing, they tried lynchings. That partly failing, they tried shaming dissenters into loyalty. Fearing verbal coercion would fail, they tried protective laws that might consolidate vulnerable outposts. When the northern majority finally found minority governance intolerable, the southern minority (or rather, initially, the secessionist minority of the southern minority) withdrew its consent to be ruled.

Two democratic imperatives clashed here: the majority's right to govern, Lincoln's favorite wartime slogan, and the minority's right to withdraw consent to be governed, Jefferson Davis's favorite patriotic emblem. The ideological clash would blur in the second half of the Civil War, after Lincoln's Union came to fight for slaves' right to withdraw their consent to be ruled by slaveholders. But in the first half of the Civil War, when Lincoln rejected black troops and repudiated his generals' emancipation initiatives, the issue was stark. Lincoln's Union initially fought to contain a minority that had controlled and now would revoke majority rule. The slaveholders fought to establish a Confederacy that would save a minority's consent to be governed and prevent the minority's property from becoming a discussable issue.

Latin American slavery controversies never carried the added burden of these showdowns over republicanism. And so in all the Americas after the Haitian slave revolt, only in the United States did the final fate of slavery hang on the verdict supposedly reserved for undemocratic governments: Whose regime can rally the largest and most sustained commitment on the battlefields?

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