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Reading American Art

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9 The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis: Invoking and Inverting Autobiography

Kirsten P. Buick

Born to a Chippewa mother and an African American father, Mary Edmonia Lewis (ca. 1843–after 1909) is the first documented American woman sculptor of African Indian descent. Her work has a far-reaching cultural significance because it is inflected by each modifier, both singly and in combination, that can be used to describe her: "American," "woman," "sculptor," "African American," and "Native American." Yet, while the subjects of her sculptures are African American and Native American women, invoking her autobiography, their features follow idealized, western European models. Why did Lewis eschew ethnological models? Why does it matter?

Lewis's Freedwomen

Twentieth-century interpretations are unsatisfactory and tentative. Many scholars have observed that the women Lewis portrayed do not "look African" or "look Indian." Their long, straight hair, their keen European features, and the white marble of their "skin" belie their subject matter. Yet the issue of ethnicity is either a stated paradox that is left unexplained or is read against Lewis, with claims that she had no real care for "her people."[1]

Attention is also directed to gender. Criticism of Lewis's *Forever Free* (fig. 9.1), for example, has often regarded the relative positions of the male and female as reinforcing gendered stereotypes of male "aggression" (note also the raised arm) and female "passivity." In her reading of the antithetical positions of the male and female, Jean Fagan Yellin describes the male's hand as resting "protectively" on the woman's shoulder, while his other hand is raised "in a triumphant gesture."

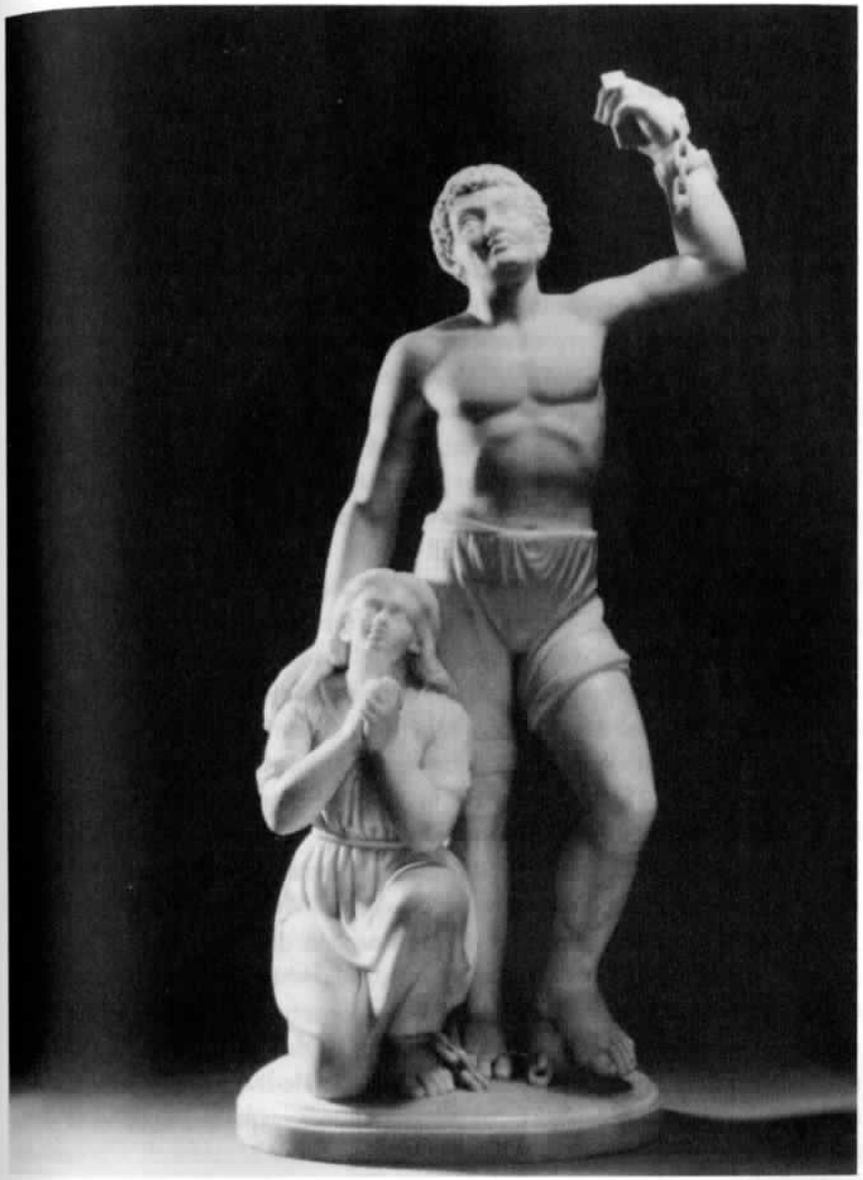

Figure 9.1 Edmonia Lewis, *Forever Free*, 1867. Marble, 41¼ inches. Howard University Art Gallery, Washington, D.C.

In Albert Boime's analysis, the male places his hand "condescendingly" on the woman's shoulder. Despite differing interpretations of the touch, for both scholars the issue is male agency in the face of female passivity. Frances K. Pohl explains the group in these terms: "The subservient position of the woman in *Forever Free* may have been a subtle commentary on the struggles that lay ahead for African-American women within their own community."[2]

As interpreted by these scholars, *Forever Free* is a visual testament of a patriarchal society in which the female is subordinated to the male. While it is tempting to examine *Forever Free* in light of recent developments in race and gender studies, we must also interpret it with regard to the aspirations of nineteenth-century African Americans. In this view, the sculpture presents a reconstructed image of the African American family after slavery and becomes a subtle commentary on the hopes for the newly liberated population.

It is important to remember that Victorian expectations about the role of women applied to free black people as well as to white people, and in this sense Lewis's freedwoman is connected to all women. Like her European American counterpart, the African American female was expected to observe a set of prescriptives found throughout the literature of the nineteenth century that defined the Cult of True Womanhood. Simply stated, she was supposed to be domestic, submissive, pious, and virtuous. As Judith Sealander has shown, before the Civil War the African American press employed images reflecting the Cult of True Womanhood to protest the constant violation of woman's "true" nature under slavery. The enslaved African American woman lived in the midst of a paradox, for while she, as the ideal woman, was "a soothing helpmate to her husband," she might also need to be "wily and physically courageous . . . able to murder her master, hide out in swamps, and ford rivers." Freedom brought a new paradox. As James Oliver Horton has explained: "During the nineteenth century, as now, Black liberation was often defined in terms of the ability of Black women and men to become full participants in American life. Ironically, this not only meant the acquisition of citizenship rights, almost all of which were applied only to men, but also entailed an obligation to live out the gender ideals of American patriarchal society. . . . All women were expected to defer to men, but for Black women deference was a racial imperative."[3]

Does *Forever Free* represent a commentary on oppression or subordination, or a conformity to gender ideals of the times? With emancipation, former slaves could marry and live in families. If we reexamine Lewis's statue as a representation of the birth of the African American "family" after slavery, the freedwoman's posture can be seen to reflect the qualities ascribed to the "True Woman"—submission, piety, and virtue.

Within this new family that emancipation created, the male also had a role to fill. Like his white counterpart, he was entrusted with the protection of his family. In *Forever Free*, the male's stance and his raised arm, interpreted as either triumphant or aggressive, signify this potential to protect and thus mark his new status as the head of a family. Horton explains that for African American men "the ability to support and protect their women became synonymous with manhood and manhood became synonymous with freedom. Often slaves demanding their freedom used the term 'manhood rights.' Manhood and freedom were tied to personal power."[4] If we read Lewis's work as a unit instead of as a reflection of opposing forces—domination versus subordination, or man versus woman—we see that, as Yellin claims, the male's hand rests "protectively" on the female's shoulder. No longer is she the white man's property. Instead, and in terms of nineteenth-century gender ideals, she belongs to the man who has the capacity to protect her. There is no evidence in the work itself that Lewis was critical of their relationship or commenting on female oppression. Nor did the viewing public perceive it thus.

Completed in Rome in 1867, *Forever Free* was the second "ideal work"—a sculpture based on a narrative from literature, mythology, or the Bible—that Lewis made in Europe. Created four years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, it was also Lewis's second contribution to the celebration of liberty. She originally titled the sculpture *The Morning of Liberty*, but inscribed on the front of its base are the words "Forever Free" from the proclamation's text.[5]

The woman is dressed in a simple, belted shift. She kneels on one knee and clasps her hands as if in prayer. With head tilted and chin raised, she gazes upward. Her long hair is without curl and flows from a center part, and her nose, viewed in profile, is straight. Around her left ankle are a manacle and chain, which seem to bind her to the base of the statue. At her side stands the man, dressed only in soft-looking cloth shorts. He stands in a classic contrapposto pose; under his left heel are the ball and chain that once restrained him. Although a manacle encircles the wrist of his raised arm, in his hand he holds the broken manacle and chain that have come from his ankle. His right hand rests on the right shoulder of the woman, who leans into his right leg. He, too, gazes upward. His hair is a tight cap of curls.

A formalist reading of *Forever Free* supports the figures being read as a unit rather than in opposition. Together, they form a compact silhouette made up of a series of discrete triangles, beginning with the horizontal triangle defined by the man's upraised arm and right shoulder and expanding into the vertical triangle created by his head at the apex and his bent left leg and female companion

at the base. The overall triangulation of the figures is reinforced and echoed by the pyramidal shape of the female. Though she kneels and he stands, their bodies are in perfect harmony. They gaze in the same direction, and the tilt of their heads—his to the right and hers to the left—creates a sense of intimacy reinforced by his touch on her shoulder. Despite the separate chains that bind them, the pair exhibits, through the rhythms of their individual bodies, the indivisible "bonds" of their commitment to one another.

By October 18, 1869, Lewis had returned to the United States to attend the sculpture's dedication at Tremont Temple in Boston after its removal from its exhibition site at the gallery of Childs and Company. At 7:30 P.M., for an admission fee of twenty-five cents, the public was admitted to the ceremony in which the statue was formally presented to the Reverend Leonard A. Grimes, a prominent abolitionist minister. The dedication was a carefully staged event that included singing and, according to one newspaper account, a "colored performer" who played the organ. Prominent male abolitionists, both white and black, were featured speakers—the Reverends J. D. Fulton and R. C. Waterston, William Lloyd Garrison, William Craft, and William Wells Brown.[6] According to Elizabeth Peabody, writing for the *Christian Register:*

> All who were present at Tremont Temple on the Monday evening of the presentation to Rev. Mr. Grimes of the marble group "Forever Free," executed by Miss Edmonia Lewis, must have been deeply interested. No one, not born subject to the "Cotton King," could look upon this piece of sculpture without profound emotion. The noble figure of the man, his very muscles seeming to swell with gratitude; the expression of the right now to protect, with which he throws his arm around his kneeling wife; the "Praise de Lord"—hovering on their lips; the broken chain,—all so instinct with life, telling in the very poetry of stone the story of the last ten years.[7]

At this gathering *Forever Free* represented an appropriate testimony to the abolitionist argument that slavery destroyed the integrity of the family, perverting for those enslaved the biologically determined male and female functions within society.[8] Grimes, to whom the statue was dedicated, was a particularly fitting choice. Born a free person of African descent in Leesburg, Virginia, in 1815, he had dedicated his life to helping runaway slaves and was particularly known for his work in reuniting families torn apart by enslavement.[9]

Grimes and the other abolitionists at the dedication believed that the abolition of slavery would set male and female roles to rights. For them and for Lewis, freedom was seen as a masculinized process. Until the African American man was free to establish a black patriarchy, the woman, they believed, would remain enslaved, as Lewis presented her in *Forever Free.* For white abolitionists, however, there were limits, suggested by the way the *Christian Register* chose to interpret the male figure's upraised arm. The potential for aggression in this gesture was neutralized with one paradoxical description: his "muscles seem[ed] to swell with gratitude." In this interpretation, the fear of black male violence emerges as an uncomfortable subtext, much as it does in the vernacular thanksgiving "Praise de Lord" ascribed to the figures. The black male's piety, this reading implied, would constrain any violent tendencies.[10]

While her art seems to support the gender ideals of her era, Lewis herself (fig. 9.2) did not conform to these ideals. Her odd clothes, her denial of marriage, her decision to sculpt—all contravened Victorian conventions. Yet these were the same choices that had been made by the other women sculptors who had preceded her to Rome—Harriet Hosmer, Anne Whitney, and Louisa Lander. But in her sculptures, Lewis not only selected subjects who conformed to Victorian gender ideals; she also depicted these women in an idealized way. Like the woman in *Forever Free,* the woman in Lewis's first ideal work, *The Freedwoman on First Hearing of Her Liberty,* was presented in a kneeling pose.

In 1866, Henry Wreford, columnist for the *Athenaeum,* described *The Freedwoman,* which is now lost: "She has thrown herself to her knees, and, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, she blesses God for her redemption. Her boy, ignorant of the cause of her agitation, hangs over her knees and clings to her waist. She wears the turban which was used when at work. Around her wrists are the half-broken manacles, and the chain lies on the ground still attached to a large ball. 'Yes,' [Lewis] observed, 'so was my race treated in the market and elsewhere.'"[11] Here Lewis chose to depict what is perhaps the oldest personification of family in all of Western art—mother and child. With the end of slavery, mother and child were no longer property that could be separated and sold. The African American woman could fulfill her proper role as mother to her child, the most valued role a woman could play within nineteenth-century gender norms.

One year after the *Athenaeum*'s review, a writer for the *Freedmen's Record* noted the similarity between the women in *The Freedwoman* and *Forever Free.* "Many of our readers will he glad to hear from Edmonia Lewis. She sent us a photograph of a new design for a group called 'The Morning of Liberty,' representing a standing male figure, casting off his chains and a young girl kneeling beside him. The design shows decided improvement in modelling the human figure, though the type is less original and characteristic than in the 'Freedwoman,' which she sketched in the Spring. Her next step will be to combine the merits of the two and give us a really valuable group."[12]

Figure 9.2 Henry Rocher, *Edmonia Lewis*, c. 1870. Albumen silver print, 3⅝ × 2⅛ inches. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Both freedwomen are posed to underscore their submissive, pious character, validated by their newfound freedom to act out normalized gender roles. Both are part of a family.

Lewis's Bondwomen

In contrast, Lewis's *Hagar in the Wilderness* represents the frustration of normalized gender roles within the body of one female figure (fig. 9.3). It is an allegorical statement about the abuses suffered by black women when a black patriarchy is not in place to protect them.

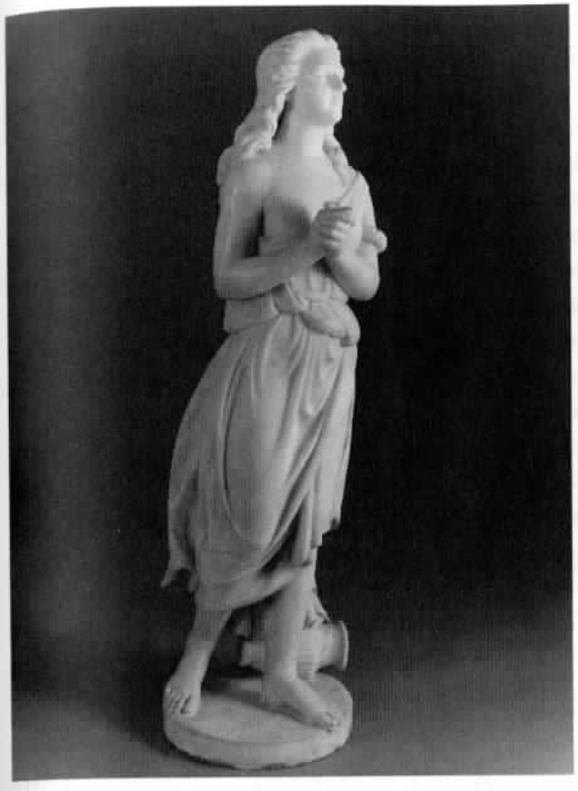

Figure 9.3 Edmonia Lewis, *Hagar in the Wilderness*, 1875. Marble, 52⅞ inches. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., gift of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Hagar, the Egyptian bondwoman to Sarah and Abraham, appears twice in the Old Testament (Gen. 16:1–16, 21:9–21) and once in the New Testament (Gal. 4:22–31). In the Old Testament story, Sarah, who is barren, sanctions the impregnation of Hagar by Abraham. Ultimately Hagar and her son, Ishmael, are sent away to wander in the wilderness. Because Egypt was coded as black Africa among abolitionists and colonizationists in the nineteenth century, Hagar was a particularly pertinent allegory of chattel slavery and the indignities that black women suffered.[13]

Lewis's treatment of the subject skillfully manages to allude to each appearance of Hagar in the Bible. The first time Hagar appears, she has become pregnant and is perceived by her mistress, Sarah, as making a mockery of her barrenness. Abraham gives Sarah full authority over Hagar, and Sarah deals "hardly with her" (Gen. 16:6). As a result, the pregnant Hagar flees into the wilderness, where she is comforted by the angel of the Lord near a fountain of water. This may be the moment at which Lewis depicted Hagar. She is pregnant with Ishmael. The jug at her feet suggests the fountain at which the angel found

her. The angel tells Hagar to return and submit to Sarah. Then God makes ninety-year-old Sarah fertile, and she also bears a son, Isaac. When Sarah finds the two boys playing together, she insists that the bondwoman and her son be sent away. They again wander in the wilderness, and when their water is gone Hagar places Ishmael under a shrub so that she will not see him die (Gen. 21: 15–16). Once again, in the midst of her despair, she is visited by an angel of the Lord. If this is Lewis's scenario, Hagar is once again alone, but her son is nearby; the jug at her feet symbolizes her search for water.

Finally, in the New Testament, Hagar is invoked as an allegory to differentiate between those who are free within the Spirit and those who are enslaved by the flesh (Gal. 4:24). Paul writes, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Gal. 4: 30). In Lewis's allegory, Hagar, with the presence of her son implied, represents the despair and dismantling of the African American family under slavery. Where there is no male to protect, the mother and child are disinherited. The normalized condition of patriarchy has been inverted.

This was not Lewis's first depiction of Hagar. Another sculpture of this bondwoman, completed in 1870, was exhibited in Chicago that year. It is now lost, but we do have Lewis's comment on it: "I have a strong sympathy for all women who have struggled and suffered. For this reason the Virgin Mary is very dear to me."[14]

In *Hagar in the Wilderness,* Hagar, like Lewis's second freedwoman in *Forever Free* (and presumably like her first), clasps her hands, but unlike her sisters, Hagar is troubled. Her brow is furrowed. She stands and she is alone, trapped by slavery's invisible bonds. But while all three women express themes specific to the plight of African Americans, they look like Europeans, with straight hair and classically straight noses. Though depicted as white, they represent Lewis's desire to broaden the category of "woman" to include women who were not European American.

Lewis's Indian Women

It is significant that Lewis's Indian woman, Minnehaha, while dressed as a Native American, also displays features that are European. Lewis very consciously manipulates significant details of her appearance. Her bust of Minnehaha (fig. 9.4) and the Minnehaha of *The Marriage of Hiawatha* (completed in 1868 and 1871, respectively) have noticeable bumps in their noses, but Minnehaha's profile in the ideal work *The Old Indian Arrowmaker and His Daughter* (fig. 9.5), completed in 1872, is markedly different.[15] Here the nose is straight. Clearly, Lewis's women bear only the trappings of a specific ethnicity. Aside from Hagar, whose bonds are allegorical, all of her African American women

Figure 9.4 Edmonia Lewis, *Minnehaha,* 1868. Marble, 12⅛ inches. From the collection of Bruce Johnson. Photograph by Keith Kreger.

wear chains, manacles, and iron balls, while her Native American women wear animal skins, beads, and feathers.

Conversely, in Lewis's works, men signify ethnicity. As carriers of specific identities, they are the "bearers of meaning."[16] The man in *Forever Free* has the curly hair associated with an African heritage, and his features are slightly broader than those of the woman. Likewise, the old man in *The Old Indian Arrowmaker and His Daughter* and the male figure of *Hiawatha* (fig. 9.6), the bust on which her later work *The Marriage of Hiawatha* (fig. 9.7) was based, display the high cheekbones and hooked noses commonly associated with Indians. Why did Lewis "whitewash" her black and red female figures? Her decision to obliterate "color," like her positioning of the female figure in relation to the male, was again influenced by the Cult of True Womanhood, which crossed all racial boundaries. In addition, it was common artistic practice in the nineteenth century to depict Native American women according to Greek ideals, while African American women were rarely depicted at all.

Art and Self

Lewis's decision to "neutralize" her women while racializing the men was a great deal more complex than making her heroines acceptable, sympathetic figures to the dominant culture. Her decision was a direct result of how she wanted herself to be perceived as an artist and as a person.

Under slavery, Hazel B. Carby points out, African American women "gave birth to property and, directly, to capital itself in the form of slaves, and all slaves inherited their status from their mothers." But because she has shed all markers that would identify her as chattel, Lewis's freedwoman in *Forever Free* can no

Figure 9.5 Edmonia Lewis, *The Old Indian Arrowmaker and His Daughter*, 1872. Marble, 12½ inches. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., gift of Mr. and Mrs. Norman B. Robbins.

longer be a carrier of property or even of racist stereotypes. She is indeed free. The "purging" of blackness was also a well-worked if problematic theme in anti-slavery fiction, as Karen Sánchez-Eppler has argued: "The very effort to depict goodness in Black involves the obliteration of Blackness." In fact, the tragic mulatta, invented by the white abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, was, according to Carolyn L. Karcher, just white enough to bridge the gap between black and white women. Her very whiteness, in fact, symbolized the "penetration" of her body by the white master. A sympathetic figure, she existed between two worlds but belonged to neither. The Indian woman, too, had to be "cleansed" of her identity to be acceptable. Pocahontas was perhaps the most famous of these mediating heroines. Within discourses of American culture, the Indian woman who was not a "princess" was a "squaw" (the rough equivalent of the stereotype of "mulatta" versus "whore").[17]

Examining the intersection of slavery with the rhetoric surrounding the meaning of "blackness" is one way to interpret Lewis's sculpture, and it provides

a likely explanation for Lewis's decision to purge color. By eliminating ethnic identity, Lewis eliminated the stereotype as well. But the question remains as to why she eschewed ethnological models only for her women. In answer, it may help to rephrase the question this way: What would Lewis have risked if she had sculpted obviously black or obviously Indian women?

For the daughter of a Chippewa and an African American, the risk was that the public would view the works as self-portraiture. Clearly Lewis did not want viewers to make any correlations between her women and her "self." In a sense, she suppressed "autobiography" so that she could not be read into her sculptures. Lewis's ethnicity, or "blood," as it was termed in the nineteenth century, was an obsession with her reviewers and interviewers. Speculations as to whether her Indian or African heritage was dominant, for example, appeared in articles by Child and in a biographical sketch by William Wells Brown.[18] As a result, Lewis identified with her freedwomen, with Hagar, and with Minnehaha on the level of discourse only—through interviews and reviews of her work. She refused to be victimized by her own hand.

In an interview with Henry Wreford, Lewis invoked the authority of her heritage: "My mother . . . was a wild Indian, and was born in Albany, of copper colour, and with straight Black hair. There she made and sold moccasins. My father, who was a negro . . . saw her and married her. . . . Mother often left her home, and wandered with her people whose habits she could not forget, and thus we her children were brought up in the same wild manner."[19]

To maintain authority over her voice, Lewis had to authenticate her position as an objective observer and to safeguard her position of power as an artist.[20]

Figure 9.6 Edmonia Lewis, *Hiawatha*, 1868. Marble, 14⅛ × 8 × 5¼ inches. From the collection of Bruce Johnson. Photograph by Keith Kreger.

Figure 9.7 Edmonia Lewis, *The Marriage of Hiawatha*, 1871. Marble, 31½ inches. Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio, on loan from a private collection.

Like other black women who entered the public arena in the nineteenth century, Lewis found that credibility, in the form of objectivity, was very difficult to achieve.

This perspective becomes clearer by examining the strategies adopted by African American women autobiographers. Beth M. Doriani, who has studied two autobiographical accounts by black women—Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861) and Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig: or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), published as a novel—points out that female slave narratives are entirely different from male slave narratives. Male narratives masculinized the meaning of freedom and recounted their journey from "bondage to independence" as one from slavery to freedom and manhood. The journey was marked by the achievement of literacy and the physical mastery over the slaveholder; it was a gradual emergence into personhood and self-reliance.

The emergence of the black woman into personhood was an altogether different matter. Unlike black male narrators who could "buil[d] his story around a presentation of himself that emphasized . . . the qualities valued and respected by white men," for black women a presentation of self based on the qualities valued by white women was not possible for two reasons. First, the sexual abuse black women suffered had to be addressed, but in as detached a manner as possible, lest they alienate their audience. Above all, narratives by female slaves had to be rooted in "facts." "The most reliable slave narrative therefore would be," writes James Olney, "the one that seemed purely mimetic, one in which the self is at the periphery instead of the center of attention . . . transcribing rather than interpreting a set of objective facts."[21]

Second, because the history of sexual abuse was a matter of public record, black women had to wrest for themselves a sense of morality that (while not equal to) was as legitimate as that prescribed for white women. As a result, they engaged and subverted the "sexual morality found in the white women's genres, daring their readers to confront the complexity of morality and virtue. In doing so, they bent the conventions to their other purpose, the creation of selves consistent with their own experience as black women. They show that the world of the black woman—as a person inextricably bound up with others yet responsible for her own survival, emotionally, economically, and politically—demands a revised definition of true womanhood, a revision of the nineteenth-century white woman's social and literary stereotype as well as that of the black woman, the 'tragic mulatta.'"[22]

Like Jacobs and Wilson, Lewis had to rely on white abolitionists for support and success. By "whitening" the features of her African American and Indian American women, Lewis obtained a distance from them and a measure of objectivity—and therefore credibility, not only with her patrons but as an artist who worked in the neoclassical style. Thus, instead of taking her Indian subjects directly from her mother's people and naming them as such, she opted to interpret Native American culture through the mediating figure of a white male author, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In selecting a female figure from Longfellow's sentimental *Song of Hiawatha*, Lewis chose to represent what was perhaps the most sympathetic treatment of the indigenous population to be sanctioned by the dominant culture.[23] Although her iconography was highly personal and directly relevant to her life, she maintained a distance from it by refusing to portray Minnehaha as an Indian. Quite literally, Lewis placed herself "on the periphery of the action."[24]

Through a complex process of invocation and inversion, Edmonia Lewis achieved a "creation of self through subversive interplay" with her viewers' expectations. She came into "personhood" by drawing on and reshaping the prevailing aesthetic—the neoclassical style conveyed in white marble—to illustrate sentimental literature and her heritage as an Indian, as well as those themes pertinent to the black experience in America. Yet Lewis remains a presence that is

paradoxically absent in her work: she is present as an "artist," as the creator of art, but she is absent as the "subject" or "object" of her art. She invoked autobiographical readings of her works while inverting those expectations by following mainstream modes of representation in her idealized (read, "white") depictions of women. Lewis was not unlike the author of the slave narrative, for whom, as Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates have noted, "the narrated, descriptive 'eye' . . . was put into service as a literary form to posit both the individual 'I' of the Black author, as well as the collective 'I' of the race. Text created author, and Black authors hoped they would create, or recreate, the image of the race in European discourse."[25]

Lewis undeniably manipulated the neoclassical idiom to suit her purposes. Just as her freedman stands and her freedwoman kneels at the threshold of a "normal" life under the gender conventions of the day, Lewis sought to enter the debate over who could legitimately represent those conventions in a voice both authoritative and autonomous.

Notes

A version of this essay was originally published in *American Art* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 4–19. The author wishes to thank Helen Jackson.

1. Jacqueline Fonvielle-Bontemps wrote that Lewis "never sculpted a black figure, though many of her statues dealt with racial or sexual repression as a theme. She glorified abolition as a movement and individual abolitionists, but not black people. . . . Her friends were all white." Fonvielle-Bontemps, *"Forever Free": Art by African American Women, 1862–1980* (Normal, Ill., 1980), 16. Yet another scholar wrote that "where [Lewis's] pieces lose power is in the style she adopted and the material she used: the neo-classical style, with its emphatic focus on Greek idealization, and the pristine whiteness of the marble, which supports the narrowness of the style—so that a black face must appear white and be carved according to the principles of beauty which are white, 'fine' features as perfection." See Michelle Cliff, "Object into Subject: Some Thoughts on the Work of Black Women Artists," in *Visibly Female: Feminism and Art: An Anthology*, ed. Hilary Robinson (London, 1987), 150.

2. Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven, 1989), 173–75; Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1990), 170–71; Frances K. Pohl, "Old World, New World: The Encounter of Cultures on the American Frontier" and "Black and White in America," in Thomas Crow et al., *Nineteenth-Century Art: A Critical History* (London, 1994), 182; see also pp. 144–81, 183–86.

3. Judith Sealander, "Antebellum Black Press Images of Women," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 6 (September 1982): 2, 159–65; James Oliver Horton, "Freedom's Yoke: Gender Conventions among Antebellum Free Blacks," *Feminist Studies* 12 (March 1986): 70; see also 51–69, 71–76. See also Barbara Welter, "'The Cult of True Womanhood,' 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (June 1966): 151–74; Linda M. Perkins, "The Impact of the 'Cult of True Womanhood' on the Education of Black Women," *Journal of Social Issues* 39 (1983): 17–28; Shirley J. Yee, "Black Women and the Cult of True Womanhood," *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828–1860* (Knoxville, 1992), 40–59; Jim Cullen, "'I's a Man Now: Gender and African American Men," and Catherine Clinton, "Reconstructing Freedwomen," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York, 1992), 76–91, 306–19, respectively.

4. Horton, "Freedom's Yoke," 55

5. The Emancipation Proclamation stated that "all persons held as slaves . . . shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." For the theme of "forever free" in the popular poetry and song of the day, see Boime, *Art of Exclusion*, 163–66.

6. "Presentation to the Rev L. A. Grimes," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, Oct. 19, 1869, sec. 4, p. 5; and "The Marble Group," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, Oct. 18, 1869, sec. 2, p. 2. Archive of Col. Merl M. Moore, Falls Church, Va.

7. [Elizabeth Peabody], *Christian Register* (ca. 1869), quoted in Phebe Ann Hanaford, *Daughters of America; or, Women of the Century* (Augusta, Me. 1882), 316.

8. See Kristin Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850–1860," *American Quarterly* 45 (December 1993): 556–95.

9. See William Wells Brown, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (New York, 1863), 217–20.

10. Piety as it was applied to the African American male was a complex issue in the nineteenth century. It was a quality sometimes ascribed to the infantile (as opposed to the savage) black man—innocent and on the threshold of manhood. See Michael Hatt, "'Making a Man of Him': Masculinity and the Black Body in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture" *Oxford Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (1992): 22–23. Piety was also associated with blacks as a race. According to Harriet Beecher Stowe, blacks were "natural" Christians; see Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly*, (1852; rpt. New York, 1965). See also Arthur Riss, "Racial Essentialism and family Values in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" *American Quarterly* 46 (December 1994): 513–44.

11. Henry Wreford, "A Negro Sculptress: Rome, February, 1866," *Boston Athenaeum*, March 3, 1866: 302.

12. *Freedmen's Record* 3 (January 1867): 3.

13. Harriet Beecher Stowe, for example, described Sojourner Truth interchangeably as African, Libyan, Ethiopian, and Egyptian; see Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sibyl," *Atlantic Monthly* 11, no. 66 (April 1863): 473–81. Cleopatra's race was also the subject of an ongoing debate in the nineteenth century. See George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1877–1914* (New York, 1971), 74–75, 79; and Robert J. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York, 1995).

14. Edmonia Lewis, quoted in Laura Curtis Bullard, "Edmonia Lewis," *Revolution* 7 (April 20, 1871): unpaginated.

15. In *Old Indian Arrowmaker and His Daughter* we know that the daughter is

Minnehaha because of Longfellow's poem and because the piece closely resembles a Currier and Ives print of the same subject. See Cynthia D. Nickerson, "Artistic Interpretations of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 'The Song of Hiawatha,' 1855–1900," *American Art Journal* 16 (Summer 1984): 49–77.

16. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington, Ind., 1990), 29. Mulvey uses the term "bearers of meaning" to describe the female's function within narrative cinema: woman exists as a spectacle, an erotic object who often interrupts narrative. Lewis, by contrast, inverted this formula by sculpting a nude male who, both masculinized and eroticized, functions as spectacle and who, by virtue of his hair, carries the mark of race. See also Manthia Diawara, "Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance," in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York, 1993), 211–20; bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, 1992); Cheryl Butler, "The Color Purple Controversy: Black Woman Spectatorship," *Wide Angle* 13, no. {{FR}}3/4 (1991): 62–69; and Jane Gaines, "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory," in Erens, *Issues*, 197–214.

17. Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York, 1987), 25; Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolitionism," *Representations* 24 (September 1988): 39; Carolyn L. Karcher, "Rape, Murder, and Revenge in 'Slavery's Pleasant Homes': Lydia Maria Child's Antislavery Fiction and the Limits of Genre," in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York, 1992), 58–72. See also Judith Wilson, "Optical Illusions: Images of Miscegenation in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Art," *American Art* 5 (Summer 1991): 89–107; and Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (New York, 1991). For stereotyped images of Indian women as "squaws" and "princesses," see Rayna Green, "'The Pocahontas Perplex': The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. Ellen C. DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York, 1990), 15–21; Julie Schimmel, "Inventing 'the Indian'," in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier 1820–1920*, ed. William H. Truettner (Washington, D.C., 1991), 149–89; and Åsebrit Sundquist, *Pocahontas & Co.: The Fictional American Indian Woman in Nineteenth-Century Literature: A Study of Method* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1987).

18. See also Lydia Maria Child, "A Chat with the Editor of the Standard," *Liberator*, Jan. 20, 1865: 12; Child, "Edmonia Lewis," *Broken Fetter* 4 (March 3, 1865): 25–26; William Wells Brown, *The Rising Son; or, The Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race* (Boston, 1874), 465–68.

19. Wreford, "Negro Sculptress," 302.

20. Film theory is particularly germane to understanding Lewis's frame of reference as a black female spectator. As important as what and how she chose to sculpt was what she chose not to sculpt—half-naked black and Indian women or the depressed and dying male Indians or savages that were so popular in the nineteenth century.

21. Beth Maclay Doriani, "Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women's Autobiographies," *American Quarterly* 43 (June 1991): 201–12; and James Olney, "'I Was Born': Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature," in *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York, 1985), 158. See also Tunde Adeleke, "Black Biography in the Service of a Revolution: Martin R. Delaney in Afro-American Historiography," *Biography* 17 (Summer 1994): 248–67; and Joanne M. Braxton, *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition within a Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1989).

22. Doriani, "Black Womanhood," 207.

23. Artistic interpretations of Longfellow were common in nineteenth-century American art. See Nickerson, "Artistic Interpretations," 49–77. An equally sympathetic figure, but one more subject to "princess" stereotypes, was Pocahontas. Lewis, to the best of my knowledge, never sculpted Pocahontas, although there is evidence that she asked the abolitionist Lydia Maria Child for background information about her. Lewis probably inquired about Pocahontas not to sculpt her but to ingratiate herself with Child, on whom Lewis partially depended for monetary support. See Lydia Maria Child to Harriet (Winslow) Sewall, July 10, 1868, Robie-Sewall Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

24. Doriani, "Black Womanhood," 208.

25. Ibid., 200; Davis and Gates, *Slave's Narrative*, xxvi.