

Editors' Note: "The North Star and the New North Star"

John R. McKivigan and Jeffery A Duvall

Indiana University Indianapolis

The *New North Star* is pleased to publish the following symposium of new scholarly articles on Martin Robinson Delany's novel *Blake; or, The Huts of Blake; or, The Huts of America*. At its inception in 2019, the *New North Star* declared its goal to be to publish "new scholarship on the activities and ideas of nineteenth century African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass and the world with which he interacted." The journal always interpreted that "world" with which Douglass interacted broadly. In our issues we have published articles focusing on contemporaries of Douglass, including Ida B. Wells, Robert Smalls, and Albion Tourgée. Publication of this *Blake* symposium therefore fully conforms to our journal's original mission and our vision for its future.

There is a second reason that the editors were eager to give attention to this landmark achievement by Martin Delany. In fall 1847, when Douglass had just returned from his year-and-a-half sojourn in the British Isles, he contemplated founding an African American-edited periodical for emancipation and equal rights. Perhaps unexpectedly, Douglass encountered disapproval from his predominately White associates in the abolitionist movement, led by Boston editor William Lloyd Garrison. These coworkers persuaded Douglass to put aside his journalistic ambitions and instead undertake a speaking tour of western states where he often encountered hostile mobs. One significant exception was a warm greeting he received from the small Black community residing in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Among those individuals welcoming Douglass, he later reported, was a "noble specimen of a man, Martin R. Delany."¹ Delany had struggled since 1844 to publish a four-page periodical, *The Mystery*, to advocate for emancipation and celebrate the intellectual, religious, and cultural achievements of American Americans.

Within months of their initial meeting, Douglass and Delany decided to join forces and launch a joint journalistic venture, the *North Star*.² With funds contributed from British admirers, Douglass purchased printing equipment and set up shop in Rochester, New York, where he had encountered a cluster of antislavery sympathizers. Douglass would manage the *North Star* from its Rochester base, while Delany traveled across Pennsylvania, Delaware, Ohio, and Michigan sending the newspapers detailed reports on both the travails and accomplishments of African Americans living in those states.³ This journalistic partnership persisted only until June 1849, when Delany decided to quit to complete his studies to become a physician, but that was enough time to establish the *North Star* as the leading voice for antebellum African Americans. In later decades, the two men would feud bitterly over different visions for the future their race, but their brief collaboration was a significant milestone in African American history.⁴ By publishing the following symposium of modern scholarship on Delany's pathbreaking literary achievement, the *New North Star* seeks to also acknowledge his similarly significant contribution to the history of African American journalism in joining Douglass in founding our namesake, the original *North Star*.

¹ *Douglass Papers*, ser. 3, 1:228–31; David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 186–87.

² Tunde Adeleke, *Without Regard to Race: The Other Martin Robinson Delany* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003), 33–34, 52; Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 20–22.

³ Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 191–94

⁴ Levine, *Politics of Representative Identity*, 48–49.