Frederick Douglass's Intended Audiences for His Antebellum Autobiographies

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FREDERICK DOUGLASS'S INTENDED AUDIENCES
FOR HIS ANTEBELLUM AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of American Studies
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Kimberly Elaine Lankford
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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This study examines Frederick Douglass's manipulation of the autobiographical form to spread his changing abolitionist message to different intended audiences. Douglass used the popular and powerful slave narrative twice to gain support for abolition and address changing personal agendas. In 1845, Douglass addressed his pithy Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave to northern men and depicted himself as a self-made man who escaped slavery and found freedom in the north.

He revised his autobiography in 1855 and published My Bondage and My Freedom after he discovered northern prejudices, broke with the Garrisonian abolitionists, was recognized as a public figure, and became conscious of the power of women and free blacks as abolitionists. The 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin presented popular antislavery literature written by a woman. Douglass challenged Stowe's popular fiction with his authentic account, but also imitated her sentimental style to attract more female readers. He appealed to the shared feminine values of family and religion and illustrated how these beliefs were perverted by slavery.

Douglass also wrote My Bondage to record his new awareness of northern prejudices. He no longer viewed the north as the promised land of freedom, and shared his discovery with the northern men and free blacks that he addressed in the second part of his book.

Douglass's multiple agendas alienated some readers and sales for My Bondage lagged behind those of the Narrative. The true story of northern prejudices was not attractive to readers of sentimental fiction. He ended My Bondage as the independent male hero breaks from the Garrisonians and calls readers to action, instead of the return to the essential values of family and religion that would comfort readers of sentimental fiction. In Douglass's experience, slavery had no happy ending.
FREDERICK DOUGLASS’S INTENDED AUDIENCES
FOR HIS ANTEBELLUM AUTOBIOGRAPHIES
INTRODUCTION

This fugitive slave literature is destined to be a powerful lever. We have the most profound conviction of its potency. We see in it the easy and infallible means of abolitionizing the free states. Argument provokes argument, reason is met by sophistry. But narratives of slaves go right to the hearts of men. 
Anonymous, The Anti-Slavery Bugle
November 3, 1849.¹

By soliciting former slaves to make their personal histories known to the public, abolitionists used autobiography as a weapon to gain support for their cause. The goal of the abolitionists was to reach the largest possible audience with these life histories, to make this audience aware of the conditions, evoke sympathy, and spark action against slavery. The slave narrators would speak for the thousands who remained in bondage.

By telling his or her own story, the former slave exposed not only the horrors of the "peculiar institution," but also the workings of the mind--the memories and perceptions that helped to prove the slave's humanity. Descriptions of slavery became more shocking when readers found slaves to have minds similar to their own; African-Americans were humans like themselves.²

Many former slaves told their own stories on the abolitionist lecture circuit, but autobiographies written by
the slaves proved to be the most powerful medium. The written word could extend the audience to people who may not have wanted to be seen at abolitionist gatherings. It allowed the former slave to describe personal history in more detail than possible in a speech, and it formed a concrete record of a story "to be read by succeeding generations when my body shall lie mouldering in the dust," observed Henry Bibb.³ Most important, by emphasizing the common subtitle Written by Himself, these autobiographies proved that the slave could write; they contested claims that African-Americans lacked intelligence and gained another point for abolition.

The political agenda of the abolitionists coincided with the personal agenda of many former slaves. The abolitionists wanted a public history of slavery, while the former slaves wanted to tell their stories and realize a potential means of self-support. The result was an entire genre of literature that reached its peak between 1840 and 1860, and continued to be written even after emancipation. Historian Marion Starling claims that between 1703 and 1944 over 6,000 narratives of American slaves were produced, including interviews, essays, and over 100 book length slave narratives.⁴

Slave narrators were popular as well as prolific, as evidenced in publishing records.⁵ Not only did their narratives offer first-hand evidence of the horrors of
slavery, but they also appealed to a large audience by presenting a personal drama as compelling as the popular fictions of the time. The success continued even after abolition, proving that they were read for more than their issues. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) was the most popular with over 30,000 copies sold in the United States, England, and Ireland in its first five years.6

Douglass's initial success with the slave narrative began his lifelong attachment to the autobiographical form. He continued to explore new potentials for autobiography, revising his life story four times to address changing personal and social agendas. Douglass approached his life story as a work in progress, revising his editions in response to new issues—not creating fiction but leaving strategic silences when the actual details of his life did not match his agenda at the time.

His first, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, published in 1845 by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Office, presented his life as a pithy rhetorical device for abolition. His second, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, published in 1855 after his freedom had been bought, recalled his life in more detail. His third, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, published in 1881, looked back over his life in the public eye long after the end of slavery, without the political and social agenda
of the earlier two versions. His fourth, also entitled Life and Times, was published in 1892 and added over 100 pages to the third, updating the events of his life in the intervening eleven years.

Douglass's two antebellum autobiographies record the evolution of his abolitionist sentiments and his transformation from a slave into a black abolitionist leader. They also illustrate Douglass's literary strategies for gaining the support of particular target audiences. These strategies were important for slave narrators who had to combat the white readers' prejudices before attempting to convert them to the abolitionist cause. "Knowing that they could not assume an equal relationship with the average white American reader, blacks set about writing life stories that would somehow prove that they qualified as the moral, spiritual, or intellectual peers of whites," says critic William L. Andrews.7

Douglass adjusts his antebellum autobiographies to prove himself a peer with two different sets of readers by targeting the shared beliefs of his intended "interpretive communities."8 He selected these communities because of their potential to help the abolitionist cause. As a writer by trade after 1847, Douglass had experience identifying markets for his literature and tailoring his writing to meet their needs.

Under the direction of the Garrisonian abolitionists in
1845, Douglass addressed his *Narrative* at an intended audience of northern men. He had access to American autobiographies and previous slave narratives as models for his *Narrative*, works primarily written by men.\(^9\)

Between 1845 and 1855, Douglass became more conscious of the power of women abolitionists and began to address them in his newspaper, the *North Star*. During that period, the 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* introduced popular antislavery literature written by a woman and a nonslave and uncovered a feminine audience for abolitionist writings.\(^{10}\) Stowe’s work helped Douglass discover the antislavery arguments that would most appeal to nonslave, white women, like herself, and spark them into action for the abolitionist cause.

Douglass used Stowe’s work as a model for his 1855 *My Bondage and My Freedom*, replacing understatement with the emotionalism of popular sentimental fiction. He attempted to influence more potential women abolitionists by describing slavery in terms of attacks on their shared values—specifically motherhood, the family, and religion. But unlike Stowe, he maintained the autobiographical form. He considered his own story more powerful than fiction and felt compelled, as a former slave, to challenge Stowe’s account with the truth. He replaced Stowe’s black characters with himself—a strong, independent male—and highlighted the story of his development.
His social message was accompanied by a personal agenda. By imitating the popular style, Douglass also hoped to expunge his writing of the simplicity associated with slave narratives spread his name as a literary figure. After publication of the Narrative, Douglass continued to use both his written and oratorical skills to publicize the antislavery message and earn his livelihood. In 1847 he began the black abolitionist newspaper, the North Star, increasing his investment in the written word. As the main character of his work, he could simultaneously publicize himself.
CHAPTER I

THE NARRATIVE AND CHALLENGERS

Soon after his escape from slavery in 1838, Frederick Douglass joined the abolitionist speaking circuit as a lecturer for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and gained popularity for his oratorical skills. Telling his story in person, however, did not eliminate questions about his past. For some viewers, Douglass's successful self-improvement only made him seem unbelievable as a former slave. He was only twenty-seven years old when he first wrote his life story, the 1845 Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself, to extend his abolitionist message beyond the speaking platform and denounce claims that he had never been a slave.

In a mere 125 pages of short, simple sentences, he recounted life as a slave with little emotion. Whether or not abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison dictated the Narrative's content, Douglass strategically structured the book as a rhetorical device to strengthen its message. Building upon the American national values of industry and self-improvement, he presented his life in the familiar form of a self-made man autobiography. Douglass highlighted dramatic reversals in the American success story that
resulted because he was a slave—his attempts at self-

improvement only worsened his situation. He presented the

north as the promised land and, by contrast, emphasized the

threat to American values found in the slaveholding south.

He addressed an intended audience of white, northern

men, who shared beliefs with editor William Lloyd Garrison,

such as the value of self-education and self-sufficiency. In

the Narrative, Douglass became a self-made, independent male

hero who journeyed to freedom without the support of others,

then found his "family" with the abolitionists.

The book quickly became the most popular slave

narrative. The first edition of 5,000 was priced at 50
cents per copy and sold out in four months. Within a year, four more editions of 2,000 each sold out, bringing the totals for the year to 13,000 copies. Five British editions were printed in 1846-47, four of 2,000 and one of 5,000, bringing the British total to 13,000 by 1847. Sales continued at a rapid pace for the next five years. By 1850, over 30,000 copies of the Narrative had been published in America and the British Isles. A French edition was published in 1848, and a German one by the end of the decade.²

The Narrative's popularity was unquestionable, but strong sales did not ensure that readers were buying the book for its antislavery message—they may have been interested in the exciting adventure, and not swayed by its
argument. Since Douglass's fight for abolition continued after the book's publication, he and abolitionists were interested in its effect on the readers. Reader response could help them determine whether the intended audience had been addressed, and help them assess subsequent strategies for reaching the public. Douglass and the Garrisonians had easy access to many of the reviews through their reprints in the Liberator.

Despite the Narrative's high sales, its reviews were primarily confined to praise from abolitionist presses, offering Douglass a limited gauge of success at converting readers to the abolitionist cause. With sales of over 30,000 in five years, the readership must have extended beyond abolitionist circles. People in opposition ignored Douglass's and other slave's narratives, either by not reading the books or by not writing about them.

The abolitionists generally praised the Narrative for its success at documenting slavery first-hand and for its simple style that was equated with truth. Most reviewers emphasized the Narrative's power as a historical record, not as a literary work. The Boston Courier, for example, "recommends the work as good evidence of what slavery is like written by one who has experienced it. . . [containing] many descriptions of scenes at the South which, if true, bear sufficient witness against the 'peculiar institution,'"
to make every honest man wish its downfall soon, and by almost any means.”3

Similarly, the New England Society of Boston praised Douglass’s Narrative for setting the record straight. Its May 27, 1845 resolution, proposed by Wendell Phillips, welcomed "the new anti-slavery lecturer, the Narrative of Frederick Douglass" and recommended the narrative to all "who believe the slaves of the South to either be well treated, or happy, or ignorant of the right, freedom, or need of preparation to make them fit for freedom."4

Douglass had presented his Narrative to prove that, despite his intellectual sophistication, he had been a slave. Many abolitionist reviewers, however, qualified claims about Douglass’s intelligence and viewed the Narrative’s simplicity not as consciously pithy writing, but as the best that could be expected by an uneducated person. Simplicity, to them, proved authenticity—an attitude similar to the abolitionist who once told Douglass, "Better have a little of the plantation manner of speech than not; 'tis not best that you seem too learned."5

The Boston Transcript, for example, qualified the praise of Douglass’s writing, emphasizing its value as a "well written history, coming from one who only by snatches was able to instruct himself, and that too with the bloody lash ready on detection, to punish the crime of acquiring
knowledge, it may be pronounced an extraordinary performance."\(^6\)

The review by the Lynn Pioneer emphasized the excitement of the story and praised its simple, truthful style, paternalistically relating it to childhood:

It is evidently drawn with a nice eye, and the coloring is chaste and subdued, rather than extravagant or overwrought. Thrilling as it is, and full of the most burning eloquence, it is yet simple and unimpassioned. Its eloquence is the eloquence of truth, and so is as simple and touching as the impulses of childhood.\(^7\)

Margaret Fuller, in her June 10, 1845 New York Tribune review, equated simplicity with truth, but also placed more emphasis on the Narrative's literary qualities:

Considered merely as a narrative, we have never read one more simple, true, coherent, and warm with genuine feeling. It is an excellent piece of writing, and on that score to be prized as a specimen of the power of the black race, which prejudice persists in disrupting.\(^8\)

She was the only identified woman reviewer, and was alone in mentioning its emotion.

British editions of the Narrative appeared soon after Douglass traveled to Great Britain in August 1845. These reviews reflected detachment from the antislavery argument. Some British reviewers praised the Narrative for its potential effect on America, and others ignored the issue and analyzed it as a work of art—presenting possible reasons why its popularity extended beyond the bounds of the antislavery issue.
Concerned that Americans be aware of the reception abroad, *Littell’s Living Age*, a Boston periodical, reprinted a review from the British *Chambers’ Journal*, prefaced with "Independently of all interest in the story itself whether truly given or not, it is important for us to know what kind of narratives about America are spread through Europe."

*Chambers’* first notes the *Narrative’s* popularity, then suggests that any acknowledgment may have been more public in Britain where slavery was not an issue: "Taking all together, not less than one million of persons in Great Britain and Ireland have been excited by the book and its commentators."* Chambers* quoted many passages, all emphasizing self-education, associating Douglass with the image of the American self-made man.

A review from the League at London, reprinted in the *Liberator*, illustrated its detachment from the antislavery debate by assessing the book more on its literary merit than its use as an abolitionist tool. Like American reviews, it qualified the writing style, but it also questioned the content as if it were a work of fiction:

This book is a curiosity, however we view it . . . to understand and appreciate the Narrative it is necessary to lay aside the office of critic, and realise the condition of the author, whose whole mind seems to be filled with the subject of slavery and its victims . . . only in this way can the writer be forgiven his occasional elaborate portraits of individuals having nothing about them worthy of notice, save their almost incredible brutality. But even as a literary production, this book possesses no ordinary claims. The author, though uneducated, or rather self-educated, displays great natural powers; he utters his thoughts
always lucidly, and often with a polished and vigorous eloquence.

The reviewer also believed that the book could be used to argue "against the natural inferiority of the Negro."\(^{10}\)

The mind of the Negro was also the subject of some American responses. In her 1853 *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe acknowledged Douglass's autobiography as a window into the mind and recommended it "to anyone who has the curiosity to trace the workings of a intelligent and active mind through all the squalid misery, degradation, and oppression of slavery."\(^{11}\)

Stowe herself was fascinated with Douglass's mind and corresponded with him for advice when writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She identified him in her *Key* as a source for her character George Harris: "With regard to the intelligence of George and his teaching himself to read and write, there is a most interesting and affecting parallel to it in the 'Life of Frederick Douglass.'"\(^{12}\)

A few reviewers believed that Douglass's intelligence continued to be stifled even after his escape, foreshadowing the argument that Douglass's improvement was limited by abolitionist paternalism. Margaret Fuller's New York *Tribune* review offered a perspective on the *Narrative* from outside of the Boston abolitionist circle. Her praise of simple style was not limited to Douglass as a former slave, but recommended for all authors. In contrast, she criticized the abolitionist preface writers:
The book is prefaced by two communications—one from Garrison, and one from Wendell Phillips. That from the former is in his usual over-emphatic style. . .he has indulged in violent invective and denunciation till he has spoiled the temper of his mind. Like a man who has been in the habit of screaming himself hoarse to make the deaf hear, he can no longer pitch his voice on a key agreeable to common ears. Mr. Phillips’s remarks are equally decided, without this exaggeration in the tone. Douglass himself seems very just and temperate. We feel that his view, even of those who have injured him most, may be relied upon.

Fuller ended her review lamenting the loss of a great mind if Douglass had remained in bondage: "We wish that everyone may read his book, and see what a mind might have been stifled in bondage--what a man may be subjected to the insults of spendthrift dandies, or the blows of mercenary brutes."13

Lydia Maria Child mentioned Frederick Douglass in her comments about Fuller’s review in a June 22, 1845 letter to Louisa Loring. Like Fuller, she criticized the Garrisonians for their paternalistic controlling influence:

I liked her notice of the life of Frederic [sic] Douglass, which is I think the best thing ever written by a colored man. It has, what our colored friends are very apt to lack, (and so are females) and that is ballast enough for the sails. I think it is a pity Garrison wrote a preface. It will create a prejudice in many minds, at the outset. They had better have let him tell his own story, in his own simple manly way.14

These reviews helped Douglass to realize the hindering paternalism of white abolitionists, which eventually led to his break from the Garrisonians. Douglass redirected his method for improving the lives of African-Americans. By 1855, he would recognize Fuller and Child’s criticisms of

But these abolitionist reviews, however, offered Douglass little guidance for converting nonabolitionists to the cause. The silence from nonabolitionist presses made it difficult to determine the full scope of his readership, and how they were affected by the book.

The quantity of northern newspapers that did not review slave narratives is surprising. Many periodicals were reluctant to review any slave narratives, even if they were antislavery-oriented publications. Some magazines included antislavery articles, reviews of antislavery books by white authors, and were even edited by writers or supporters of slave narratives, but did not review the narratives in print.

The *Massachusetts Quarterly Review*, for example, devoted many pages to the issue of slavery. Theodore Parker, who praised Douglass’s narratives in one of his speeches, and Richard Hildreth, writer of Archy Moore’s "autobiography," were major contributors. It included reviews of many books, but none of slave narratives. James Freeman Clark and Ephraim Peabody reviewed slave narratives while at the *Christian Examiner*, but not in their previous positions at the *Western Messenger*.15
Douglass only became aware of Maryland readers, for example, when they contested his claims, such as A.C.C. Thompson's letter in the *Delaware Republican*. Or sometimes reports would leak out from the state. According to Douglass biographer Dickson J. Preston, "as Douglass expected, the *Narrative* produced a furor of controversy in Talbot County. Despite severe Maryland laws against dissemination of abolitionist literature, it was widely circulated in the state, and excerpts were published in a pamphlet." One correspondent from Baltimore reported in September 1845 that the *Narrative* was "being read avidly and five hundred copies are still wanted here." But no public reviews appeared in magazines or newspapers, most likely prohibited by law.

The 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, brought public responses to antislavery literature from throughout the country. Unlike slave narratives, Stowe's work was reviewed by its opponents.

As a work of fiction by a white author, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the type of antislavery literature abolitionists had gone to great pains to eliminate and replace with eyewitness accounts written by the slaves themselves. Abolitionists disapproved of Stowe's use of fiction, and were disappointed that a former slave did not meet with the same success—*Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold more copies than any
slave narrative, and its popularity overshadowed all attempts by slaves to speak for themselves.

Abolitionists, however, did praise Stowe's success at spreading the antislavery message. First published serially in the Washington National Era, when Uncle Tom's Cabin was offered as a two-volume book in 1852, the entire first edition of 5,000 copies sold out in two days; 50,000 sets were sold within eight weeks. "By this time, Jewett had three power presses going twenty-four hours a day, 100 book binders at work, and three mills running to supply the paper." By the end of the year, 300,000 copies had been sold in the United States, thirty editions had been printed in England and Scotland, and two French and one German translation appeared.

Souvenirs, toys, and games quickly flooded the market. "This is without precedent in the history of book publishing in this country," said Norton's Literary Gazette. Stowe's work caused so much discussion that proslavery books such as Aunt Phillis' Cabin, The Cabin and the Parlor, and Uncle Tom's Cabin as it is attempted to "correct" Stowe's vision.

The popularity of Uncle Tom's Cabin helped the slave narrators and abolitionists define a market for antislavery literature that reached beyond abolitionist circles. Public discussion of Uncle Tom's Cabin revealed reactions that may have filled the spaces where the slave narratives had not
been mentioned, or gave slave narrators advice for capturing a larger market.

Many readers who had publicly ignored slave narratives did comment on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in news accounts and both positive and negative reviews. Unlike slave narratives, Stowe's work was reviewed by its opponents—and even negative reviews helped to publicize who was reading the book. The *Southern Literary Messenger* of Richmond, known for its "avoidance of political and factional dispute," broke its silence and offered a scathing review. Editor John R. Thompson had stated in its editorial policy, "As the prefix Southern... we shall ever be prompt to defend those rights and interests, when they are made the objects of ruthless assault," and determined the need for defense when he declared to writer George Frederick Holmes, "I have read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' carefully, and feel assured that you will find abundant material in it for slashing criticism of the severest kind."23

The *Southern Literary Messenger* and the *Southern Quarterly Review*, among others, printed numerous discussions about Stowe's novel and its authenticating *Key*. Holmes's review for the *Key* was the worst; he called Stowe "an obscure Yankee school mistress, eaten up with fanaticism, festering with the malignant virtues of abolitionism, self-sanctified by the virtues of a Phariasiac religion, devoted
to the assertion of women's rights, and an enthusiastic believer in many neoteric heresies.  

Even negative reviews proved that antislavery literature was being read in the south. Travel narratives and diaries reinforce its dispersal, proving that the southern readership for antislavery literature was more extensive than Southerners were likely to admit. Although rarely sold openly, Frederick Law Olmsted and Rev. Philo Tower discovered quiet sales of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in their travels to the south. Olmsted pondered the paradox of Stowe's novel in the south; it was rarely seen, but discussed often. Mary Chesnut was one of many southerners to reveal her emotional response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in her personal diary.

Although some reviews focused on Stowe's perspective as a white woman, an issue not directly related to Douglass's work, many readers lumped it into the general category of antislavery literature and offered comments that could help Douglass tap into Stowe's extended market. In discussions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, reviewers often mentioned the most famous slave narrative of the time or its author, Frederick Douglass.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* not only made slave narrators aware of a larger market for antislavery literature, but it provided them with a new stylistic model. Most slave narrators of the 1840s had fashioned their life stories
after previous American autobiographies and slave narratives, most of which were written by men. Stowe produced the first successful example of antislavery literature written by a woman and presented slave narrators with a model for popular sentimental fiction that could be used to attract a feminine audience for abolitionist works.

Many readers distinguished *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* from slave narratives by its emotionalism. The emotional power of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was publicly acknowledged even by abolitionists who had opposed Stowe’s use of fiction to spread the antislavery message. William Lloyd Garrison, in the March 26, 1853 *Liberator*, praised Stowe’s work for its "rare descriptive powers, frequent moistening of our eyes, and the making of our heart grow liquid as water, and the trembling of every nerve within us, in the perusal of the incidents and scenes so vividly depicted in her pages."  

Slave narrators responded to Stowe’s work by employing some of her literary techniques in an attempt to duplicate her success. Douglass immediately imitated Stowe’s work with his own antislavery novella, the 1853 "Heroic Slave," first published in *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*. He combined the *Narrative*’s story of a heroic slave with the third person emotional style of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In the third person, Douglass became the voice of the black and the white characters, giving both groups long monologues to express the inner feelings that had been subsumed by action in *Uncle*
Tom's Cabin, and introducing stronger black characters than Stowe had.

He presented scenes familiar to Stowe's readers, such as tavern discussions with slave traders and dramatic escapes, and unlike the Narrative, he emphasized the emotional aspects of slavery. Douglass gave hero Madison Washington emotional experiences that were popular with Stowe's readers, but were not a part of his own life story: he described Washington's agony as a slave father and his dehumanizing experience on the auction block.  

Douglass's Heroic Slave, Madison Washington, was a real person who had led a successful revolt on the slave ship Creole in 1841. Douglass soon transformed the man into an example, "regularly citing Madison Washington in his speeches as the epitome of the spirit of resistance in the African-American slave."  

In "The Heroic Slave," Douglass contrasted slavery with American ideals more openly than in the Narrative, employing some of the stylistic strategies of sentimental fiction. Set amidst the dualities of the Virginia landscape--home to the founding fathers and home to slaves--Douglass began by emphasizing the ironies of the character's name, place, and position: Madison Washington was "a man who loved liberty as well as did Patrick Henry. . . and who fought for it with a valor as high, an arm as strong, and against odds as great, as he who led all the armies of the American colonies
through the great was for freedom and independence, lives now only in the chattel records of his native State."  

Slave narrators not only imitated Stowe's work, but they also challenged it with authentic accounts, emphasizing the truth of their stories by contrast. A review for Peter Still's biography, The Kidnapped and Ransomed, acknowledges Stowe's effect on slave narratives: "Mrs. Stowe's works of world-wide fame, are awakening in all quarters a demand for authentic personal narratives of experience in slavery; and the demand is likely to be well supplied."  

Uncle Tom's Cabin created a new atmosphere for slave narratives in the 1850s. Slave narrators vied with Stowe for the last word--hoping to replace her fiction with their authentic voices. Uncle Tom's Cabin included exciting events and heart-wrenching episodes, but the third person account limited Stowe's ability to portray the characters' inner thoughts and feelings. Although her slaves were sympathetic characters, they were still presented as the "other"--reinforced by her use of dialect.

As the most popular former slave in the 1850s, Frederick Douglass was the strongest candidate to challenge Stowe's fiction--not with a fiction of his own, but with an updated version of his life story. In 1845 Douglass was known only to the audiences of his antislavery lectures, a circuit that was centered in New England and New York and did not extend south of Pennsylvania." The Narrative's
early sales had hinged upon Douglass's relationship with the Garrisonian abolitionists who published, authenticated, marketed and sold the book, and even provided testimonies dictating how it should be read. Garrison's publication, *The Liberator*, served as the *Narrative*'s main source of exposure by republishing many of its reviews.

Douglass had also become a celebrity in the intervening years, and was distinguished as an individual from the mass of slave narrators. In the 1850s, his popularity extended beyond New England antislavery societies. After publishing the details of his life in the *Narrative*, he fled to Great Britain to avoid recapture. He returned as a free man and a well-known personality.34

By 1855, Douglass was known not only as the author of the best selling slave narrative, but as the editor and founder of the eight year old newspaper the *North Star*, as a popular speaker and writer, and also as the former slave who broke with the Garrisonian abolitionists. Frederick Law Olmsted, in his 1856 travel narrative *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853-54*, was one of many writers who identified Douglass as the exemplary former slave:

> From slaves they have, sometimes, come to be men of intelligence, cultivation, and refinement. There are no white men in the United States that display every attribute of a strong and good soul better than some of the freed slaves. What would Frederick Douglass have been had he failed to escape from that service which Bishop Meade dares to say is the service of God? . . . What has he become since he dared commit the sacrilege
of coming out of bondage? All the statesmanship and kind mastership of the South has done less, in fifty years, to elevate and dignify the African race, than he in ten.35

Douglass would use this esteemed position to gather support for his race.

Rev. E.J. Stearns, in his 1853 Notes on Uncle Tom's Cabin: Being a Logical Answer to the Allegations and Inferences against Slavery as an Institution, expressed similar sentiments:

Frederick Douglass, as able a man as Maryland has produced, a man of greater intellect and nobler character than any public man of that State at this day, was born and held a slave for twenty years... No man can tell how many more black Douglasses there may be withering in ignorance and wretchedness on these plantations, that Col. Edward Lloyd may live in aristocratic pomp and luxury.36

Stearns, however, used Douglass' popularity not to emphasize his unique qualities, but to present him as an example of the type of person who may remain in bondage. If other slaves were freed, they may prove to have the same abilities as Frederick Douglass. Both Olmsted and Stearns describe Douglass as the ideal former slave.

Douglass used his fame to challenge Stowe's fiction in his 1855 autobiography My Bondage and My Freedom. Douglass transformed himself into the Heroic Slave, assuming many of Washington's attributes. Douglass's name had made its way into a national literary market by the time he wrote his second autobiography, and people were interested in the
details of his life as an individual, not just as an example of a former slave. Douglass anticipated that his growing fame would attract readers from beyond abolitionist circles, perhaps some who had first experienced antislavery literature with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. He borrowed some of Stowe's literary techniques and well-received emotional subjects to target her large market.

But he presented the story of slavery in a way Stowe could not— as a first-person chronicle of an individual slave's development. By replacing the minimalist version of the *Narrative* with the detailed life history of *My Bondage*, Douglass presented more authenticating facts to compete against Stowe's fiction.
CHAPTER II

DOUGLASS'S RESPONSE:

MY BONDAGE AND MY FREEDOM

The popularity of the Narrative proved to Douglass the power of the written media, reinforced by the success of Uncle Tom's Cabin in the 1850s. In lectures, Douglass could constantly update his position on abolition and his perceptions as a free black man, but the written form of his Narrative had been printed for posterity. After his experiment with antislavery fiction, Douglass returned to the popular and powerful form of the slave narrative, even though many readers were already familiar with his life story.

Ten years after publication of the Narrative, Douglass revised his autobiography and presented the 1855 My Bondage and My Freedom. His second autobiography was not just a continuation of the 1845 Narrative; the years that had passed since his earlier publication comprise only forty-one pages of the text. The 406 page volume altered and expanded Douglass's life story, exploring his past in more detail and emphasizing the emotional aspects that had not been included in the Narrative. All of Douglass's changes in My Bondage
were intentional, not from memory lapses—he included important passages verbatim from the *Narrative*, proving that he must have had a copy with him when he wrote *My Bondage*.

Douglass told his life story from a different position. His visit to nonslaveholding England, his growing awareness of northern prejudices, and his concern for free blacks after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act left Douglass with a new attitude towards abolition and a new agenda for his life story. He would no longer fight for abolition alone, but also for an end to prejudice.

Douglass's legal freedom and his break with the paternalistic Garrisonian abolitionists continued to liberate him after 1845. The title of his 1855 version highlights the increased possession—of himself and his account—that Douglass had achieved in the years since the *Narrative*.

Douglass's new status as a free man and well-known personality transformed his role in the antislavery battle, his relationship with the literary market, and his depiction of himself. Douglass wrote *My Bondage* from the position of a celebrity, but highlighted the irony of his less than human status.

The spread of Douglass's popularity enabled him to assume primary marketing responsibilities for the 1855 autobiography, allowed him more control over its
authentication, and established a wider market that was familiar with his name. Unlike the two lengthy essays by white abolitionists that prefaced the *Narrative, My Bondage* was introduced by James M'Cune Smith, a black physician and anti-Garrisonian abolitionist, and prefaced anonymously by "The Editor." By 1855 few people questioned the existence of Frederick Douglass, and the preface authenticates events and facts, not the author: "I am authorized to say that there is not a fictitious name nor place in the whole volume; but that names and places are literally given, and that every transaction therein described actually transpired." Frederick Douglass essentially authenticates himself with a letter that fills two out of four of the preface's pages.

In the letter, Douglass distinguishes himself from most slave narrators by including an apology for presenting his own life story—a literary technique common to autobiographies but missing from most slave narratives. In his second autobiography, Douglass attempted to move from the literary circle of slave narrators into the larger circle of autobiographers. He claimed to present his autobiography upon request from a friend:

> It is not to illustrate any heroic achievements of a man, but to vindicate a just and beneficent principle, in its application to the whole human family, by letting in the light of truth upon a system. . . . Many facts, wither from slaves, slaveholders, or bystanders, calculated to enlighten the public mind, by revealing the true nature, character, and tendency of
the slave system, are in order, and can scarcely be innocently withheld.⁶

Douglass thus transforms his autobiography from an act of vanity into an act of duty.

One duty was to challenge the fictional *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Unlike Stowe, Douglass presents a main character who powerfully writes about his own development. By emphasizing the self more than the events, the autos over the bios, Douglass distinguishes his "I-narrative" from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and establishes his position as a literary figure. William L. Andrews identifies *My Bondage* as a compelling self-portrait "not of a self-made man but a man still in the making."⁷

As Douglass chronicles his development, he adds details that provide a more thorough historical record of his life, emphasizing authenticity and challenging the fiction. The editor of the preface offers a direct response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, distinguishing *My Bondage* from the fiction by its truth:

If the volume now presented to the public were a mere work of ART, the history of its misfortune might be written in two very simple words -- TOO LATE. The nature and character of slavery have been subjects of an almost endless variety of artistic representation; and after the brilliant achievements in that field, and while those achievements are yet fresh in the memory of the million, he who would add another to the legion, must possess the charm of transcendent excellence [sic], or apologize for something worse than rashness. The reader is, therefore, assured, with all due promptitude, that his attention is not invited to a work of ART, but to a work of FACTS -- Facts, terrible and almost incredible, it may be -- yet FACTS, nevertheless.⁸
Douglass was presented as a spokesman to dispel criticisms by black abolitionists such as Martin Delany, Douglass's original partner at the North Star, who had written that Stowe "knows nothing about us."9

Douglass adds supplementary material to reinforce the historical details of My Bondage—offering his own authentication within the text.10 Eastern shoreman Dickson J. Preston, in Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years, claims that the details added to My Bondage increase the truth value of the story. As one of few scholars who did not rely on Douglass's writing's alone to portray his history, Preston conducted careful research into Douglass's childhood on Maryland's eastern shore. He discovered discrepancies between Douglass's Narrative and the records—adjustments that had been made for Douglass's rhetorical purposes: "Frederick's first autobiography, Narrative, had been less a factual story of his childhood than a powerful and effective polemic against slavery. He had painted with bold strokes all the evils of slavery, portraying his youth as one of cruelty and deprivation, reciting every horror he had observed or heard about."11 My Bondage, however, not only included more details, but also a more accurate description of Douglass's sentiments: "He appears to have been making a deliberate effort to correct the record of his childhood and to present a more balanced account."12

Douglass's writing style changes with the new agenda toward
authentication; detail and commentary replace the understatement of the *Narrative*, most obviously illustrated by the change in length.\textsuperscript{13}

Douglass had employed understatement in the *Narrative* to illustrate that slavery was incompatible with humanity—that its evils were so common they were described without emotion. But in 1852 emotionalism, according to many reviewers, accounted for much of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s popularity and helped render the *Narrative* archaic. According to a review of Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the *Southern Quarterly Review*, Douglass's first narrative had already been overshadowed: "The horrors of poor Frederick Douglass himself have been greatly surpassed by later sufferers, who have set up as rivals for Northern favor."\textsuperscript{14}

Stowe's merger of the antislavery topic with the popular style of sentimental fiction helped make *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the first American novel to sell more than one million copies. This success expanded Douglass's consciousness of the feminine market for antislavery literature. Between 1845 and 1855, Douglass also discovered the importance of attracting a feminine audience for his abolitionist writing. Women were not only avid readers, but many were also becoming increasingly powerful and vocal as abolitionists.

Douglass encountered many powerful abolitionist women during the decade between autobiographies. The campaign to
purchase his freedom was led by an English woman, Ellen Richardson. The New York Tribune's review of the Narrative, one of the most publicized praises, was written by a woman, Margaret Fuller. Douglass's home of Rochester, New York was the site of the Rochester Ladies' Antislavery Society, "one of the most active in the movement," according to historian William S. McFeely.\textsuperscript{15}

During this decade, many women's antislavery societies became more vocal as members simultaneously fought for their own rights. Women abolitionists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, and Susan B. Anthony discovered that the message of human equality also applied to women. They employed tactics for social change that they had learned as abolitionists, and some spread the women's rights message while on the abolitionist lecture circuit.\textsuperscript{16}

Douglass became a strong supporter of the women's rights movement in this decade, an interest he would maintain throughout his life. He spoke at the 1848 Seneca Falls convention, the first women's rights convention. According to Stanton, its leader, he was an active participant: "With the help of Frederick Douglass... [after] heated discussion," the suffrage resolution passed "by a small majority."\textsuperscript{17} Douglass also attended the 1853 Rochester Women's Rights Convention, led by his friend Amy Post.
During this decade, Douglass publicized his support of the women's movement in his newspaper, the *North Star*, and after 1851 in *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. The newspaper's slogan delineated the parallel between both groups' struggles: "Right is of no Sex, Truth is of no Color—God is the Father of us all, and we are all Brethren." Articles supporting women's rights were included as well as those on abolition. On July 28, 1848, for example, Douglass wrote in the *North Star* about the Seneca Falls convention: "We are free to say that in respect to political rights, we hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man." 18

With the *North Star*, Douglass also experienced his first success at attracting a feminine abolitionist reading audience. Only one in five of the readers came from the black audience that the newspaper had originally addressed, but many of the other readers were women who received it well "because of its progressive stance concerning the women's movement." 19

Meanwhile, Douglass enlisted the help of a woman to run his newspaper. Abolitionist Julia Griffiths moved from England to the Douglass home in 1848 to serve as business manager for the *North Star*. Her close friendship with Douglass increased his awareness of abolitionist women and may have influenced the content of his writing. She edited some of Douglass's newspaper articles and probably helped with *My Bondage*, according to McFeely: "We have no notes,
no correspondence, concerning the travails of composition, though we can be sure that Julia Griffiths urged him on and probably helped with the editing of Bondage, their last collaboration." 

Douglass's growing awareness of the strength of abolitionist women, coupled with the popularity of sentimental fiction, especially Uncle Tom's Cabin, prompted him to reconstruct the intended audience for his autobiography. In 1855, Douglass simultaneously imitated and challenged Stowe's novel. He employed the techniques of sentimental novelists to help publicize his first-hand account of slavery to the largest audience, directing it at women as well as men. His movement away from the terse, "simple style" that many Narrative reviewers had associated with former slaves, could also extend the writer and editor's literary image beyond that of slave narrator.

Using Uncle Tom's Cabin as a model, Frederick Douglas revised his life story to appeal to the emotions of northern, female readers whose strongest values were family and religion. Literary critic Jane Tompkins attributes the success of sentimental fiction, with Uncle Tom's Cabin as an exemplar, to its appeal to the shared cultural values of its readers:

The power of a sentimental novel to move its audience depends upon the audience's being in possession of the conceptual categories that constitute character and event. That storehouse of assumptions includes attitudes toward the family and toward social institutions; a definition of power and its relation to
individual human feeling; notions of political and social equality; and above all, a set of religious beliefs that organizes and sustains the rest.\(^2\)

Douglass hoped that by highlighting the feminine values Stowe had emphasized, he would match her success at attracting and moving female readers. His 1855 catalog of changes parallels Tompkins's list of values.

Douglass transforms the *Narrative*'s independent male hero into a protagonist who searches for the family-type relations that had been ruined by slavery. He replaces depictions of physical violence with descriptions of emotional violence, prefaced by direct addresses to "Dear Reader." Even in less emotional scenes, he exchanges the *Narrative*'s references to "you," or "anyone," for more personal addresses to "Reader," a familiar convention in sentimental fiction. He adds a chapter about his personal religious conversion aimed at readers who had shared strong religious beliefs with Stowe's character of Uncle Tom.

Douglass opens *My Bondage* by immediately appealing to his intended audience's strongest value—the family. He resurrects the natal family that had barely appeared in the *Narrative*, including a detailed description of the Bailey family that carries a completely different message than the *Narrative*'s minimalist version. In *My Bondage*, Douglass emphasizes that he came from a strong family background common to his readers. From this position, he could include
his present perception of the separation of families, a theme that had achieved much emotional appeal in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The three lines about his grandparents from the first autobiography are replaced by an eight page nostalgic description of his childhood in their cabin. The *Narrative*'s one paragraph about his mother, and equal space devoted to his unknown father, becomes an entire chapter entitled, "The Author's Parentage." Douglass describes his strong family background with pride: "They [his grandparents] were considered old settlers in the neighborhood, and, . . . I infer that my grandmother, especially, was held in high esteem, for higher than is the lot of most colored persons in slave states,"

After he emphasizes how slaves, like the readers, have strong family feelings, he shows how slavery destroys these domestic ideals. He targets the emotions of his intended audience by openly acknowledging the family as a sacred institution, an attitude shared by women readers, then describing its destruction by slavery. Slavery's separation of children from parents "is a successful method for obliterating from the mind and heart of the slave, all just ideas of the sacredness of the family as an institution," (38). This would represent a destruction of central values for his intended female audience.
Douglass reverses shared domestic values to illustrate the horrors of slavery in women's own terms. He directly contrasts the slave's life with the ideal scene in the reader's home: "My poor mother, like so many other slave-women, had many children but NO FAMILY! The domestic hearth, with its holy lessons and precious endearments, is abolished in the case of a slave-mother and her children," (48). The slave mother is denied the love of her family even at the moment of death. He contrasts the slave mother's deathbed scene with the version familiar to readers of sentimental fiction: "The heartless and ghastly form of slavery rises between mother and child, even at the bed of death. The mother, at the verge of the grave, may not gather her children, to impart to them her holy admonitions, and invoke for them her dying benediction," (57).

Douglass's changing attitude toward the death of his mother in the two autobiographies illustrates his strategies to attract two audiences with different shared beliefs. In the Narrative, the independent male hero is not stifled by family relations: "I received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger," (Narrative, 49). In My Bondage, however, family becomes a central value, and his mother's presence remains with him through his life: "It has been a life-long standing grief to me that I knew so little of my mother . . . I take few steps in life, without feeling her
presence," (57). The death of his mother begins Douglass’s quest for family-type connections that continues throughout his second autobiography.

Douglass hopes to find another mother figure in Baltimore mistress Sophia Auld, describing his intital relationship with her in terms of a mother and child: "I had been treated as a pig on the plantation. I was treated as a child now." He also describes her as "more akin to a mother than a slaveholding mistress," (143). This familial association increases the impact of her transformation. When her experience as a slaveholder destroys this relationship, she symbolically abandons her child. This perversion of domestic ideals attributed to slavery had the potential to move even prejudiced women readers. Douglass hoped to become a sympathetic character as his search for familial relations was continually thwarted by slavery. In 1845, on the other hand, Douglass had emphasized his independence for the Narrative’s intended male audience and had included no references to Auld in motherly terms.

In My Bondage, Douglass also recalls his personal attachments to patriarchal figures, which he had omitted from the stark good/evil dualities of the Narrative. In the Narrative, Douglass had transformed the people from his past into exaggerated characters to illustrate the extremes of slavery. Hugh Auld, for example, became the embodiment of an evil master in both the Narrative an 1848 "Letter to My
Old Master," which appeared in the North Star: "I intend to make use of you as a weapon with which to assail the system of slavery—as a means of concentrating public attention on the system, and deepening the horror of trafficking in the souls and bodies of men."  

In My Bondage, however, Douglass softens the Narrative's severe depictions of his masters and he remembers all father figures with a greater sense of nostalgia—targeting his intended audience's domestic values as he continues to search for a family. Douglass modifies his sentiments towards his masters to make them, like himself, trapped within an evil system that perverts traditional values.

In the Narrative, Captain Anthony was "not a humane slaveholder. . . He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave." In My Bondage, however, Douglass examines the psychological explanations for Anthony's severity in more depth and evokes sympathy for the character:

Capt. Anthony could be kind, and, at times, he even showed an affectionate disposition. Could the reader have seen him gently leading me by the hand—as he sometimes did—patting me on the head, speaking to me in soft, caressing tones and calling me his 'little Indian boy,' he would have deemed him a kind old man, and, really, almost fatherly.

Douglass then qualifies his praise, adding "But the pleasant moods of a slaveholder are remarkably brittle; they are
easily snapped; they neither come often, nor remain long," (80). Like with the mother figures, Douglass discusses how the slaveholding ruins otherwise good people and destroys his search for a family.

Douglass also describes slavery's attack on the ideals of virtue and love, two values held strongly by the women readers he addressed. He shows that slaves held the same definition of virtue as the readers, but the practice was prohibited by slavery: "Slavery provides no means for the honorable continuance of the race. Marriage . . . has no existence here, except in such hearts as are purer and higher than the standard morality around them," (86).

He includes slave Esther's story as an illustration of the moral perversions demanded by slaveholders. Beautiful Esther loved another slave but was prohibited from seeing him. Douglass discusses the power of a woman's love in terms that would appeal to readers of sentimental fiction: "A woman's love is not to be annihilated by the peremptory command of any one, whose breath is in his nostrils," (84). But Douglass adds a brutal twist to the familiar story of forbidden love. Love did not overcome as in fictions; when Esther did visit her beloved, she was whipped.

Douglass appeals to an intended female audience by describing the scene in terms of the emotional rather than the physical violence. The whipping "brought cries as well as blood," cries of "Have mercy," (85). Then Douglass
censors his account: "When the motives of this brutal castigation are considered, language has no power to convey a just sense of awful criminality" (85). For readers who shared beliefs towards love and honor, the assault to their values would fill in the silences.

In 1845, however, Douglass had no difficulty finding language to describe the scene to the Narrative's intended male audience: "The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip to make her scream; and whip to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin!" (Narrative, 51). He had also included a step by step description of one whipping, and recorded the overseer's exclamations of "d---d b---h" twice.

In the 1855 account, Douglass not only changed the emphasis on the violence, but he also changed the slave's name from Hester to Esther. The name "Esther" would invoke, for his religious readers, a biblical reference to beautiful Queen Esther who saved the Jews from destruction. The slave's name reinforces the irony of the perverse world of slavery: instead of saving her people, this slave was whipped for her beauty.

Douglass adds more religious references in My Bondage, directed at a female audience whose lives were organized by religion. In the Narrative, he had primarily spoken of
religion in terms of the hypocrisy of "Christian" slaveholders. In *My Bondage*, he uses religion to highlight the values he shares with female readers who found power in prayer—a piousness that helped make Uncle Tom a sympathetic character. Douglass attempts to parallel himself with Stowe's character by adding a chapter on his own conversion that had not been included in the *Narrative*. He relates his religious experience directly to abolitionism in a subtle attempt to convert readers to the abolitionist cause:
"Previous to my contemplation of the anti-slavery movement... my mind had been awakened to the subject of religion," (166).

Douglass also adds religious opinions to descriptions that had appeared in the *Narrative*. He prefices a verbatim account of slaves singing with, "I have sometimes thought the mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress spiritually minded men and women with the soul-crushing and death dealing character of slavery, than reading of whole volumes of its mere physical cruelties. They speak to the heart of the thoughtful," (98). And who were the thoughtful? Douglass's intended feminine audience for *My Bondage*—the group he hoped to attract to his story and to the abolitionist cause.

Douglass, however, had another agenda for publishing his revised life story. He also wanted to publicize his heightened awareness of northern prejudices and help free
blacks as well as slaves. By 1855 Douglass knew that the Mason Dixon line did not mark the entrance to freedom. Racial problems would not end with abolition—prejudices needed to be obliterated throughout the nation. This awareness erased some of the rhetorical extremes responsible for the Narrative's strength. The duality between the victim of the evil south and the hero of the good north became less distinct.

Ironically, it was because of the Narrative's popularity that Douglass first discovered that the north was far from being the promised land. After disclosing the details of his life in slavery, he discovered that the free land was not completely free: "The settling of one difficulty only opened the way for another; and that though I had reached a free state, and had attained a position for public usefulness, I was still tormented with the liability of losing my liberty," (364). In 1845 Douglass fled to England to avoid recapture, where his image of the north continued to decline. In Britain, Douglass was first exposed to a non-slaveholding country and became legally a free man and a celebrity. He realized by contrast that slavery had poisoned his entire country, and returned acutely aware of the prejudices throughout America.

Douglass includes letters in his appendix to My Bondage that describe his disillusionment with the native land. For
example, in January 1846 he writes to Garrison from Great Britain about his new contempt for all America:

... I shall be influenced by no prejudices in favor of America. ... The land of my birth welcomes me to her shores only as a slave, and spurns with contempt the idea of treating me differently. ... If ever I had any patriotism, or any capacity for the feeling, it was whipped out of me long since, by the lash of the American soul-drivers, (368-69).

Even the north, his promised land of the Narrative, had been poisoned by slavery: "In the northern states, a fugitive slave, liable to be hunted at any moment, like a felon, and to be hurled into the terrible jaws of slavery—doomed by an inveterate prejudice against color to insult and outrage on every hand..." (370). He delineates the prejudices he experienced in the North, repeating the refrain familiar to him, "We don't allow niggers in here!" As a master of irony, he contrasts the American prejudice with his celebrity treatment in Ireland. While recalling his dinner with the lord mayor of Dublin he adds, "What a pity there was not some American democratic christian at the door of his splendid mansion, to bark out at my approach, 'They don't allow niggers in here!'" (372)

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 only made the situation worse. It authorized federal warrants for the arrest of fugitives and legally bound all Americans to aid in their capture, thus extending the boundaries of slavery throughout the country: "Citizens preventing the arrest of a fugitive, or aiding in his concealment or rescue, were subject to a
fine of $1,000 or imprisonment up to six months."^{25}
Fugitives were no longer free in the north, and Frederick Douglass helped many flee to Canada. In his October 14, 1850 speech Douglass warned, "We must be prepared should the law be put in operation to see the streets of Boston running with blood."^{26}

Ironically, while Douglass loses faith in his country, he gains celebrity stature. Selected as the speaker for the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society's Fourth of July oration of 1852, he gives the speech on the fifth and uses the opportunity to express his rage towards America:

Why am I called upon to speak here to-day? . . . This Fourth of July is yours, not Mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. . . What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham. . . " (444-45)

He includes this speech in his appendix to My Bondage.

Douglass, however, had not expressed this rage throughout his experience in the north. At the time that he wrote his Narrative, he honestly believed that the north held more of a refuge. Continuing to reproduce the development of his mind, in My Bondage he recounts his evolution from naive acceptance through growing awareness. Douglass retains his original vision of the promised land upon his arrival in New Bedford, but adds the phrase 'pretty
near,' to qualify the freedom he would later find limited: "but here in New Bedford, it was my good fortune to see a pretty near approach to freedom on the part of the colored people," (346). He describes his excitement with his new found freedom, but modifies the language when discussing his first job: "That day's work I considered the real starting point of something like a new existence," not the complete new existence he had written about in the Narrative, (349).

Douglass gradually becomes aware of northern prejudices. In My Bondage, he downplays the prejudices against black calkers, as he had done in the Narrative, but he adds a tinge of irony to the second account: "I was informed that every white man would leave the ship if I struck a blow upon her. 'Well well,' thought I, 'this is a hardship, but yet not a very serious one for me.' The difference between the wages of a calker and that of a common day laborer, was an hundred per cent. in favor of the former; but then I was free, and free to work, though not at my trade," (349).

Douglass's inner voice again signals irony when he describes his experience in a northern church. "Once converted, I thought they would be sure to treat me as a man and a brother. 'Surely,' thought I, 'these christian people have none of this feeling against color. They, at least, have renounced this unholy feeling.'" Douglass's realization of the prejudices becomes more acute and he adds
a sentimental address to the reader, "Judge, then, dear reader, of my astonishment and mortification, when I found, as soon I did find, all my charitable assumptions at fault," (351-52).

Douglass’s description of the abolitionists also changes. By 1855 he had broken with the Garrisonians because of their prejudiced paternalism, disapproval of his newspaper, and differing views on the Constitution as an antislavery document. In the Narrative, the abolitionists had been his saviors in the promised land. In My Bondage, he acknowledges his naivete as he recounts his history with the intelligence of retrospect: "Now what shall I say of this fourteen years’ experience as a public advocate of the cause of my enslaved brothers and sisters? Young, ardent, and hopeful, I entered upon this new life in the full gush of unsuspecting enthusiasm... I soon, however, found that my enthusiasm had been extravagant; that hardships and dangers were not yet passed; and that the life now before me, had shadows as well as sunbeams," (359-60).

His revised attitude brings a new description of his first abolitionist speech. No longer the dramatic, spiritual climax it had been in the Narrative, the account in My Bondage highlights Douglass’s human anxieties instead of his heroic image:

My speech on this occasion is about the only one I ever made, of which I do not remember a single connected sentence. It was with the utmost difficulty that I could stand erect, or that I could command and
articulate two words without hesitation and stammering. I trembled in every limb... But excited and convulused as I was, the audience, though remarkably quiet before, became as much excited as myself, (358).

Instead of forming the climax of his life story, as it had in the Narrative, Douglass's early speeches became an illustration of abolitionist paternalism. His main concern when writing his revised autobiography was to prove that even the north was plagued by slavery—most poignantly illustrated by the prejudices of the abolitionists. His gradual realization of these prejudices coincides with the awakening of his own intellectual powers:

During the first three or four months, my speeches were almost exclusively made up of narrations of my own personal experience as a slave... 'Give us the facts,' said Collins, 'we will take care of the philosophy.' I could not always obey, for I was now reading and thinking... It did not entirely satisfy me to narrate wrongs; I felt like denouncing them, (361-62).

As Douglass discovered that prejudices permeated the north as well as the south, he added arguments against slavery that were not limited to race. For example, he describes the slave system as a perversion of domestic values to target the shared beliefs of women readers. He also includes contrasting pictures of the north and the south to illustrate that slavery poisons the entire area, especially the economy.

On the opening page, he describes his birthplace as literally diseased "the indigent and spiritless character of
its inhabitants, and the prevalence of ague and fever. . . .
decay and ruin are everywhere visible," (33). Douglass
uses the image of disease to convince even prejudiced
readers that slavery wreaked destruction throughout all
aspects of the south, making slaveholders as well as slaves
victims of the system.

By contrast, although he had criticized the prejudices
of the north, he praises the economic success of the
nonslaveholding society: "Everything went on as smoothly as
the works of a well adjusted machine. . . . In a southern
port, twenty or thirty hands would have been employed to do
what five or six did here. . . . I found that everything was
done here with a scrupulous regard to economy, both in
regard to men and things, time and strength," (345-46). His
revised depiction of his masters, as good people who had
been ruined by a bad system, could also persuade readers who
may not have agreed with the racial argument.

Since writing the Narrative, Douglass had discovered
that racial problems were unlikely to end with emancipation.
He also targeted his second autobiography at the free blacks
he had been addressing in the North Star. He selected Smith
to write the introduction as a spokesman for black readers,
who recommended the book as a model: "I shall place this
book in the hands of the only child spared me, bidding him
to strive and emulate its noble example. You may do
likewise." Douglass ends his autobiography with a vow to aid in the improvement of the freemen:

Since I have been editing and publishing a journal devoted to the cause of liberty and progress, I have had my mind more directed to the condition and circumstances of the free colored people than when I was the agent of an abolition society. . . Believing that one of the best means of emancipating the slaves of the south is to improve and elevate the character of the free colored people of the north, I shall labor in the future, as I have labored in the past, to promote the moral, social, religious, and intellectual elevation of the free colored people. . . (406)

Part of Douglass's goal was to call readers, black and white, female and male, into action.

Another part of his goal was to profit from the book's sales, with both money and fame. In 1855, Douglass's primary profession was that of writer and editor, first of the North Star beginning in 1847, then of Frederick Douglass's Paper beginning in 1851. Douglass hoped to extend his literary image beyond that of former slave by publishing a book in the popular style of the day. But one of the most popular subjects of the time was slavery, and first-hand accounts were the only literary endeavors in which black writers were practically assured success. Ironically, Douglass selected the slave narrative to spread his name beyond that of slave narrator.

The genre's popularity enticed many former slaves to share their stories for financial success. Douglass was not the only slave narrator to revise his life story. Many authors of antislavery literature produced second
autobiographies, especially after Stowe’s success. This popularity prompted Josiah Henson, for example, to enlarge and revise his narrative five times within twenty years, increasing his heroic stature with each edition as he discovered its popularity with the readers. It induced early slave narrators, such as William Grimes, to reissue enlarged narratives in response to the genre’s growing popularity; his 1825 Life of William Grimes, the runaway slave gained 25 pages and the subtitle brought down to the present time in his 1855 version. Each revision contains a pragmatic selection of history that illustrates the power of autobiography.

The competition for the antislavery literary market was not limited to slave narrators. Richard Hildreth reissued his 1837 fictional narrative, Memoirs of Archy Moore, under the new name Archy Moore, the White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive "during the tidal wave of interest in slave literature that washed the North in 1852," and added an appendix, "Notes to The White Slave," in 1853.

Douglass, however, never matched Stowe’s success at reaching these audiences. My Bondage and My Freedom sold 18,000 copies and was translated into German, but the sales lagged behind the 30,000 of his Narrative. It also lacked the sales abroad that the Narrative had achieved as a result of Douglass’s British tour.
My Bondage did not receive the publicity that the Narrative had—by 1855, a new slave narrative may have already been old news. The popularity of Uncle Tom's Cabin had not changed the reception of black authors and their narratives. The numerous reviewers who acknowledged antislavery literature with Uncle Tom's Cabin once again turned their heads from Douglass's production. Reviews of My Bondage are even more difficult to find than those for the Narrative, in part because they were generally not reprinted in the Liberator after Douglass's break with the Garrisonians. The Liberator did offer its own review of Douglass's second autobiography, labeling it "a volume remarkable, it is true, for its thrilling sketches of a slave's life and experience," but spent most of the review condemning the "virus of personal malignity" Douglass expressed towards the Garrisonian abolitionists. The Garrisonians' disapproval, however, was only partially responsible for its less successful sales.
CONCLUSION

*My Bondage and My Freedom* never reached as large an audience as Douglass had intended. His multiple personal agendas did not appeal to one group that could ensure the book's success. He wanted to challenge Stowe's fiction with an authentic account, equal *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s popularity by imitating its style, call women into action for the antislavery cause, publicize northern prejudices, inspire black readers, and promote himself as a literary figure. By the end of *My Bondage*, he had addressed women, northern men, and free blacks.

He carefully crafts his autobiography to appeal to specific audiences, but instead of amassing more readers, the successful strategies he used to address one intended audience only alienate the others. Douglass opens *My Bondage* by describing the assaults to northern feminine virtues found in the slaveholding south. He ends his book by arguing that these virtues do not even exist in the north; that they have been abolished by prejudice. No longer attacking the southern "other," Douglass aims his criticism at the north—the home of his readers. He essentially leaves his intended feminine audience in slavery, and transforms himself into the independent male
hero in freedom, addressing a possibly prejudiced northern white male audience, then addressing free blacks. Waldo Martin identifies these seemingly conflicting interests as Douglass's genuine beliefs: "In spite of his self-conscious heroism, he fervently believed in universal human equality."

But Douglass's creation of a male hero for a sentimental novel undermined the power of the genre. According to Jane Tompkins, sentimental fiction invested women with power by placing themselves and the home at the center: "The removal of the male from the center to the periphery of the human sphere is the most radical component of this millenarian scheme, which is rooted solidly in the most traditional values—religion, motherhood, home, and family." In the end of My Bondage, however, Douglass finally derives his power from his escape from traditional values and familial connections. Douglass concludes My Bondage with his break from the Garrisonian abolitionists and his disillusionment with the former promised land of the north. He returns to his Narrative persona of the independent male hero, and ends the account not with sentimental closure to reinforce the status quo, but with a call for change.

Stowe attaches a call to action after Uncle Tom's Cabin, but the text of her sentimental novel concludes
happily as the characters regain family or religious connections: Cassy is reunited with her daughter Eliza; Eliza is reunited with her husband, George Harris, and the family eventually finds freedom Liberia; Harris discovers his sister Madame do Thoux. Even Uncle Tom, who dies from a whipping, is saved in heaven by his faith while his Christ-like death saves the others on earth—George Shelby frees his slaves in remembrance Uncle Tom.

Douglass’s 1855 true story of slavery could not end as neatly as the sentimental fiction. He had wanted to imitate Stowe’s style, but by presenting his authentic account to challenge her fiction, he could never regain the love of his mother nor discover his lost siblings. His "freedom" in America was destroyed by prejudice, and even surrogate families, such as the Garrisonian abolitionists, could not offer him refuge. For Douglass, the story of slavery had no happy ending. Unreconciled and complex personal beliefs are the ingredients of autobiography, but make a disappointing ending for a work of sentimental fiction.

Douglass’s antebellum autobiographies present his evolving consciousness while they illustrate the malleability of the autobiographical form. He uses his life as a source and manipulates the elements to fulfill his changing personal agendas. Douglass is not unique in presenting a subjective view of the past; all autobiographies are subjective. Doublas is one of few
authors who actually shows the changes—making readers aware that they must interrogate all autobiographies for strategic silences. Douglass proves how autobiographers can hide the mythmaker behind the historian.⁴

Autobiography was a powerful tool to promote abolition: it presented the horrors of slavery first-hand and gave former slaves a voice in the debate. Frederick Douglass’s public agenda for his antebellum autobiographies is evident—to present his life story and promote the end of slavery. But Douglass discovered other purposes for the popular form. Douglass also found autobiography powerful to promote himself as a black leader. He changed his style to target growing literary markets for his antislavery message, reshaping the form of his life to meet changing social and personal needs.
NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION


2. Ephraim Peabody, in his 1849 Christian Examiner article, was the first critic to examine slave narratives as a literary genre, and found them calculated "to exert a very wide influence on public opinion. . . they contain the victim’s account of the working of this great institution. . . remarkable as a vivid exhibition of the force and working of the native love of freedom in the individual mind" (Ephriam Peabody, "Narratives of Fugitive Slaves," Christian Examiner 47 [July-Sept. 1849]: 61-93, rpt. in Davis and Gates, The Slave’s Narrative, 19-28, quotation on 19-20).


5. "At least six editions of Charles Ball’s Slavery in the United States were issued between 1836 and 1859. By 1856 the Narrative of Moses Roper, first published in 1837, had reached 10 editions and had been translated into Celtic. Even so trivial a volume as The Life of James Mars saw eleven editions by 1872. . . [for Josiah Henson’s narrative] a Dutch translation appeared in 1877 and a French edition in the following year. Within two years after its publication in 1853, Twelve Years a Slave: The Narrative of Solomon Northrup had sold 27,000 copies" (Charles H. Nichols, "Who Read the Slave Narratives?" Phylon 20 [Summer 1959]: 150).


8. Stanley Fish defines an "interpretive community" as a "community made up of those who share interpretive strategies," comprised of intended readers "whose education, opinions, concerns, linguistic competence, etc. make him


10. The first full-length slave narrative written by a woman did not appear until Harriet Jacobs’s 1861 Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.

11. Many critics have discussed the influence of the sentimental novel on slave narratives and abolitionist fiction after the publication of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. "Throughout the 1850s, the slave narrative and the sentimental novel freely--and lucratively--engaged in a promiscuous cross-pollination of influences," says critic Thomas Doherty. But he limits his examples primarily to women writers, and makes no mention of the popular genre’s influence on Douglass. Doherty discusses slave narrator Harriet Jacobs’s use of techniques from popular sentimental fiction to appeal to a "target group," of northern women readers in her 1861 Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Thomas Doherty, "Harriet Jacobs’ Narrative Strategies: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," The Southern Literary Journal 19 (Fall 1986): 79-91.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese also discusses Jacobs’s literary strategies used to appeal to an audience of white, northern women: "Jacobs borrowed from the discourse of free society’s convention of womanhood in order to gain a hearing for her tale." She invokes Douglass for contrast, acknowledging that his Narrative was also directed at a particular audience of northern readers, but for him it was an audience of men: [he] invoked the rhetoric of male individualism to encourage identification with his Narrative." Fox-Genovese, however, does not discuss the intended audience for My Bondage and My Freedom (Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women in the Old South [Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988], 395, 376).

Critics, particularly William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, identify Douglass’s personal changes between 1845 and 1855 as impetus behind the textual differences. Both critics emphasize Douglass’s methods for promoting his image as a Representative Man in My Bondage (see Andrews, Free Story,
213-239; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Frederick Douglass and the Language of the Self," in Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987], 98-124). But style should not be overlooked. In 1855, Douglass’s primary profession was that of a writer; any changes in writing style were not arbitrary. My Bondage’s similarities with Uncle Tom’s Cabin and differences from the Narrative are significant. Douglass’s decade of change prompted him not only to reinterpret his life story, but also to address a new audience of potential women abolitionists.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Little has been recorded about Douglass's process of writing other than the observation that he was seen less often on the lecture circuit in late 1844 to 1845. In the most recent biography of Frederick Douglass, William S. McFeely notes the absence: "In all three of his autobiographies, Douglass tantalizes us with the many things he leaves out; not the least of these is discussion of why and how he wrote them. His correspondence is equally void of references to what must have been a compelling exercise for him" (William S. McFeely, Frederick Douglass [New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1991], 115).


11. Harriet Beecher Stowe, A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Presenting the Facts and Documents Upon Which the Story is Founded (Boston: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1853), 16.

12. Ibid.


15. Julian D. Mason theorizes about the significant absence of reviews: "One wonders if at times some magazines were afraid of what honest reviews of works by Negroes might do to circulation—favorable ones perhaps reducing Southern and some Northern circulation, and unfavorable ones perhaps reducing abolitionist circulation." He found that many magazines acknowledged works by black authors in reviews of other works, and concluded that the absence was made be conscious choice, not because the reviewers were not aware of the books. Even for abolitionists, he adds, "It was hard to overcome prejudices and even favorable reviews in supposedly more favorable magazines often tempered their enthusiasm with restraint" (Julian Dewey Mason, Jr., "The Critical Reception of American Negro Authors in American Magazines, 1800-1885," [Ph.D. diss, University of North Carolina, 1962], 112, 145, 109, 160-61).

16. A.C.C. Thompson claimed Douglass’s Narrative bore "the glaring impress of falsehood on every page." He knew Frederick Bailey and the whites he described, and claimed that Douglass’s depiction was inaccurate. Douglass used Thompson’s letter to his advantage: "This is excellent," he wrote, "you thus brush away the miserable insinuation of my northern proslavery enemies, that I have used fictitious not real names" (Liberator 15 [12 Dec. 1845], rpt. in John W. Blassingame, Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1977), xxvii.


18. "Southern whites had little success in challenging the narratives because the abolitionists themselves consistently tracked down impostors before they were able to publish fraudulent accounts. In the pages of the Liberator alone,
sixteen exposes of blacks posing as fugitives appeared between 1847 and 1859" (Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, xxvii). Even genuine slave narrators were forced to prove their stories. When a group of British readers, for example, questioned the authenticity of the *Narrative of Henry Box Brown, who Escaped from Slavery Enclosed in a Box Three Feet Long, Two and One Half Feet High* (1849): "A box was made at Bradford to the specifications given in Brown's narrative. Brown was nailed inside it exactly as he had been in Richmond, and he was carried from Bradford to Leeds, a trip of 2 3/4 hours, preceded by a band of music and banners! (Starling, *Slave Narrative*, 241-42).


21. Norton's also discussed the proliferation of related items: "Within a few weeks, from North, South, East, and West, a host of pamphlets and volumes, old and new, good and bad, cheap and costly, pro and con, including facts, fictions, arguments, dramas, poetry, songs, all relating more or less to 'Life Among the Lowly' of the southern portion of our land, have been issued from the Press" (Norton's Literary Gazette 2 [15 June 1852]: 108, rpt. in Mott, *American Magazines*, 142-43).


27. A review of Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the *Southern Quarterly Review*, for example, said that the emotionalism of later works had already overshadowed Douglass's *Narrative*: "the horrors of poor Frederick Douglass himself have been greatly surpassed by later sufferers, who have set up as rivals for Northern favor" (*Southern Quarterly Review* 24 (July 1853): 233 quoted in Mason, "Critical Reception," 105).


29. In her *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe identified Douglass as one of the models for her character George Harris, but unlike Douglass, Harris was a slave father and experienced the heart-wrenching separation from his wife and child. In an autobiography, Douglass could never write about first-hand experience as a slave father.


32. "Kidnapped and Ransomed," *New Englander* 14 (Nov. 1856): 628-29, quoted in Davis and Gates, eds., *Slave's Narrative*, 31. Ironically, the biography was not written by the slave himself.


34. John W. Blassingame, editor of the *Frederick Douglass Papers*, reports an increase in American press coverage of Douglass's speeches after his trip and concludes, "He became a public figure in the United States because of his tour of the British Isles." All publicity during his twenty-one month speaking tour, even negative reports by Americans fearing that he would cause a British attack, helped to spread his name (*Blassingame, ed., Frederick Douglass Papers*, iviii).

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Douglass first experienced tension with the Garrisonian abolitionists in 1847, when he returned from his English tour with funds gathered to start an abolitionist newspaper. Douglass believed that a newspaper produced by black writers could publicize their talents and help eliminate prejudices. The Garrisonian abolitionists disapproved of the newspaper because it would compete with existing abolitionist newspapers, particularly the Liberator, that it would take time away from Douglass's speaking engagements, and that no newspaper edited by a black man had succeeded in the past. Nevertheless, Douglass published the North Star's first issue in December 1847.

Douglass's changing interpretation of the Constitution led to further disagreements with the Garrisonian abolitionists. Garrison believed the Constitution to be a proslavery document, that the nonslaveholding states must dissolve the union with the slaveholding states, and that the "non-voting principle," should be used to abolish slavery. In the 1850s, Douglass began to disagree: "I became convinced that there was no necessity for dissolving the union between the northern and southern states . . . that to abstain from voting was to refuse to exercise a legitimate and powerful means for abolishing slavery; and that the constitution of the United States . . . is, in its letter and spirit, an anti-slavery instrument. . ." (My Bondage, 396). Douglass publicly announced his dissenting view of the Constitution in May 1851 and within one year was "entirely estranged from us," said Garrisonian abolitionist Wendell Phillips (Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 1 Dec. 1852, quoted in Benjamin Quarles, Frederick Douglass [New York: Atheneum, 1969], 74.

2. According to William L. Andrews, physical freedom did not ensure that a free story could be told. Former slaves who could not write, because of illiteracy or lack of time, could not tell free stories. Slaves whose stories were closely dictated or monitored by an editor were not truly free. (Andrews, Free Story). In this sense, Frederick Douglass's Narrative was not a free story; control over the book's publication, authentication, intended audience, marketing, and possibly its content and style lay in the hands of the Garrisonian abolitionists. Not until My Bondage did Douglass write a free story--free because he selected the time to write it, the intended audience to be addressed, and method for authentication. He also had complete financial control over the book.

3. Preface to MBMF (Dover), v.
4. This type of authentication, according to Robert B. Stepto's definition, would make My Bondage an "integrated narrative," which he describes as "wherein most of the literary and rhetorical functions previously performed by several texts and voices . . . are not rendered by a loosely unified single text and voice . . . [the former slave] carries much of the burden of introducing and authenticating his own tale," (Robert B. Stepto, "Narration, Authentication, and Authorial Control in Frederick Douglass' Narrative of 1845," in Dexter Fisher and Robert B. Stepto, eds., Afro-American Literature: The Reconstruction of Instruction, 179).

Stepto identifies the Narrative as an integrated text because Douglass assumes authorial control over the authenticating texts, particularly by bringing the story full circle and ending with the scene Garrison had included in the Preface—Douglass essentially authenticates Garrison's remarks. Stepto concludes his article about the Narrative with, "An author can go no further than Douglass did without writing all of the texts constituting the narrative himself," (191).

This, essentially, is what Douglass does in My Bondage. He includes the standard authenticating documents, but the appendix, references within the text, and most of the Preface refer to previous works written by himself.


6. Preface to MBMF (Dover), vi-vii.


8. Preface to MBMF (Dover), v.


10. William W. Nichols describes the change in approach: "His voice in My Bondage is predominantly that of the scrupulous historian who is looking back thoughtfully over a terrifying past and attempting to extract some meaning from it" (Nichols, "Individualism and the Autobiographical Art: Frederick Douglass and Henry Thoreau," CLA Journal 16 [Dec. 1972]: 150). John Blassingame's studies of Douglass's speeches reveal a similar change in style. In the 1850s, Douglass traded the "the antislavery stump for the lyceum or the ceremony" and his "extemporaneous addresses were replaced by thoughtful essays read before ceremonial crowds,"--the brief outlines of the
1840s became well-researched written speeches that included supplementary sources (Blassingame, ed., Frederick Douglass Papers, 1:lxiii).

11. Preston, Maryland Years, 167.

12. Ibid, 173.

13. The Narrative was 125 pages long; My Bondage was 464 pages, including an appendix of speeches and letters. Thomas DePietro describes the change in style: "The Narrative derives much of its stylistic power from its starkness and economy; the force of My Bondage comes from an opposite technique--every detail has a background. (Thomas Michael DePietro, "Spiritual Vision and Political Revision in the Autobiographies of Frederick Douglass," [M.A. thesis, Univ. of Virginia, 1982], 13.


18. Frederick Douglass, "The Rights of Women," North Star, 28 July 1848, quoted in McFeely, Frederick Douglass, 156.


20. McFeely, Frederick Douglass, 182.

22. Douglass, MBMF (Dover), 35. Subsequent citations in this chapter to Douglass's text of MBMF will refer to the Dover edition and will appear in parentheses within the text. This description may also be more accurate than the Narrative's version. Herbert G. Gutman's longitudinal study of slave families in five southern states illustrated that "long-lasting slave marriages and families derived their inner strength from a cumulative slave experience with its own standards nd rules of conduct." In the Narrative, on the other hand, Douglass had emphasized his personal independence and minimized mention of any family relations (Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 [New York: Vintage Books, 1976], xxii.

23. Reprinted in the appendix to MBMF, 428.


27. Smith, Introduction to MBMF (Dover), xxxi.


30. Starling, Slave Narrative, 231.


3. According to David Thelan, "since an individual's starting points changes as the person grows and changes, people reshape their recollections of the past to fit their present needs" (David Thelan, "Memory and American History," *The Journal of American History* 75 [1989]: 1121). Gusdorf describes the subjectivity of autobiography as stretching the limits of truth until "the truth of facts is subordinate to the truth of the man" (Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits," 43).

4. Autobiography, says Georges Gusdorf, "shows us not the objective stages of a career--to discern these is the task of the historian--but that it reveals instead the effort of a creator to give the meaning of his own mythic tale" (Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits," 48).


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