

Renaissance Man: On Frederick Douglass and American Literature

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Born a slave in 1818, Frederick Douglass spent the majority of his life working to transform America until his passing in 1895. He now represents a formidable figure in American history, arguably as much a historical and literary renaissance man by necessity as many other Americans were by choice or inclination from his era. As Celeste Bernier notes, following his escape from slavery in 1838, Douglass became a “self-made man . . . labourer . . . family man . . . writer . . . orator . . . editor . . . philosopher . . . critic . . . politician . . . and spokesman of his race” (596). During an era when the public sphere afforded limited or no options for women, Douglass often spoke at women’s rights meetings (Becker 5), and to such a great extent that, as one of his biographers notes, he may have been “the foremost male advocate of women’s rights” of his time (Stauffer 224). He also lectured widely, travelled overseas, and consulted with President Abraham Lincoln. Seemingly ubiquitous throughout the nineteenth century, Douglass constantly evolved his purpose and mission as part of a larger effort to condemn slavery and its multitude of consequences, to improve the lives of African Americans, and to ignite social progress.

However, Douglass’s wide range of efforts and successes unfortunately problematize his importance within literary studies, the central focus of this essay and edited collection. His major contributions to other fields, particularly through antislavery activities such as advocacy and oration, make him a recurrent figure in history, political science, speech, and public speaking classrooms. Yet, Douglass still sometimes recedes from the forefront of nineteenth-century literary studies. To be sure, his heralded *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845) remains present. Often coupled with Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) to represent the lives of African Americans during the Antebellum Era, it is a cornerstone text in present day American

literature classrooms. Too often, little else of Douglass's writings receives much attention. While *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is perhaps still the best introduction to Douglass, it should not hinder readers from delving deeper into the work of one of the nineteenth-century American literature's unrecognized renaissance figures.

Many of Douglass's writing works emerged during the time of the American Renaissance, an artistic movement from the 1830s through the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865. F.O. Matthiessen's foundational study *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941) surveyed and championed five authors whom he felt distinguished American literature during this time: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. Matthiessen's study shaped high school English textbooks and, to this day, continues to inform countless upper-level undergraduate and graduate-level literature courses. One of the shortcomings of Matthiessen's study is that he neglected to consider Douglass, as well as Jacobs, and other prominent women writers from the period part of the literary elite that comprised the American Renaissance. From a modern vantage point, his study expresses what many other older studies of nineteenth-century American literature convey as well, i.e. a canon represented by white men. Subsequent studies of the American Renaissance included more about women's contributions, especially Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), as well as Douglass's *Narrative* until recently, when scholars such as biographer David W. Blight began to argue that Douglass's second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), was a more valuable contribution alongside the movement's hallmark texts.

If the American Renaissance remains the most influential literary movement from nineteenth-century American literature, then it is no longer acceptable for Douglass to remain either beyond its scope or at its periphery. Unlike the work of some of the authors included as part of the American Renaissance, Douglass's writing was both artful and highly impactful during its time. Notoriously, few people read or championed Herman Melville's later and now classic works

during his lifetime, and decades would pass before some of the other American Renaissance writers rose in stature. They struggled to find an Antebellum audience, lived in “persistently precarious positions,” and occasionally felt “uncertain about the [literary] forms they chose” (Jones 37). By contrast, though more widely known as a speaker, Douglass’s popular writings towered above many of his peers and then experienced a decline following the Civil War. Although very popular upon its release in 1855, selling roughly 15,000 copies within a few months, *My Bondage and My Freedom* subsequently went out of print for more than a century from 1865 through 1968 (Blight, “Introduction,” xxviii). This significant absence partially accounts for critical neglect of Douglass, but it is also indicative of a nation that remained racist and deeply divided long after the Civil War. As early and mid-twentieth century literary critics offered reappraisals of Hawthorne, Melville, and other Renaissance figures, Douglass’s writing fell from the wayside to an abyss, while his public persona and antislavery efforts retained some interest from historians.

As this volume of critical essays insists, Douglass deserves to be a principal figure in American history and the American Renaissance, but also within the larger expanse of American literary studies. He transcended his time period in his pursuit of progress, using whatever means necessary to advance the rights of African Americans both productively and creatively in his writing. As a result, Douglass belongs in the company of American literature’s most highly varied women and men of letters, as part of a selective group of distinctly American writers united by their successful efforts within multiple literary genres, a group that includes towering literary figures such as Mark Twain, Henry James, John Updike, and Toni Morrison. As in the cases of these authors, to isolate appreciations of Douglass to one work or genre dispels the possibility of appreciating a larger literary output and considering a wider impact which, as the contributors of this collection reveal, extends throughout the literary history of American literature into the present day. In preparation for the essays that follow, this introduction situates three forms of Douglass’s work—speeches, fiction, and autobiographical nonfiction—squarely within the realm of American Renaissance and

details why Douglass merits recognition as one of its key writers along the likes of Emerson, Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau.

Speaking the Future of America into Existence: Douglass's Speeches

Beyond the realm of literary studies, Frederick Douglass is celebrated for his speeches, antislavery efforts, and public intellectualism, all stemming from a remarkable oratory career. Thanks to extraordinary recovery work, scholars affiliated with the *Frederick Douglass Papers* have documented more than 2,500 public performances, and between 1979 and 1992, selected, edited, and published 273 speeches as part of a five-volume scholarly edition (McKivigan, et al. xv). The sheer volume, while daunting, invites more comparative scholarship between Douglass and other prominent speakers throughout the nineteenth century since Douglass's speeches reflect the art of public speaking during this time. Within literary studies, one useful point of comparison is the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose speeches and essays remain at the forefront of nineteenth-century studies. In her essay in this volume, Regina Yoong details how while the development of Emerson's and Douglass's visions differ, there is also much to be gleaned from how these two discuss what it means to be American in Emerson's "The American Scholar" (1837) and Douglass's "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" (1852). While Emerson emphasizes the necessity of the formation of a distinct American intellectual, Douglass, highlighting the differing subjectivities among the American free and enslaved, problematizes the notion that a nation built upon and operating because of slave labor can produce any tradition separate from slavery and suggests ongoing and unavoidable links with other nations.

"The American Scholar" is commonly taught as Emerson's rallying call that sought to distinguish American colleges and universities from their European counterparts. Though Emerson places strong emphasis on the necessity of learning from the past, he more fully stresses the importance of establishing a uniquely American intellectual tradition. Describing the chief purpose of colleges, he writes that they "can only highly serve us when they

aim not to drill, but to create with the hope of molding students who balance and extend their learning through action” (49). Merely sixty-one years old at the time of his speech, the United States was a young country, and Emerson looked outside schoolhouse walls for actions, behaviors, and signs of progress that could define the new nation and separate it from European traditions. He found and proclaimed the partial answer to be American interaction with the raw materiality and unspoiled natural environment. To further his point, he attempts to redefine wealth and abundance in differing terms than European precedents, advancing a vision of education that eschews “vulgar prosperity that retrogrades ever to barbarism” by also celebrating American efforts related to art and scholarship (53). Read today, this programmatic plan suggests the importance of remaining aware of the dangers of materialism and of preserving stories and poems that advance the heart and soul of a nation. It is a vision that Emerson suspected would require deliberateness and self-styled study and that would necessitate the sacrifice of material goods.

Frederick Douglass’s “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (1852) counterbalances Emerson’s vision in “The American Scholar” and demonstrates broader insight into nineteenth-century America. Speaking almost fifteen years after Emerson, Douglass forcefully reminds readers that the American environment, imagined as a playground of knowledge acquisition and expression for Emerson, was in reality far from a safe, free, or exploratory place for all people residing within the United States. His speech functions not as a direct rebuke of “The American Scholar” so much as a reminder of lost opportunities for millions of African Americans enslaved in the United States. Given during a Fourth of July celebration in 1852, Douglass’s speech first establishes that the United States remains a divided nation. With a powerful use of repetition, Douglass excoriates the current state of the country, scolding white Americans that the holiday “is the birthday of your National Independence, of your political freedom,” while more than seventy-five years after the founding of the United States, he notes, the country still does not recognize that a huge portion of its people

CRITICAL
CONTEXTS

Autobiography as Rhetoric: Reading Douglass with Franklin

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock

Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass's autobiographies offer ideal opportunities to demonstrate the ways in which "fact" and "persuasion" are in no way mutually exclusive and to hone critical thinking skills by inviting students to attend to how both content and form can participate in privileging particular textual interpretations. The fact that Franklin and Douglass's autobiographies share so many emphases and characteristics is especially useful in highlighting not only antebellum American cultural context, but how the same rhetorical emphases and strategies can be put to very different purposes.

My approach to Franklin's and Douglass's autobiographies begins with two questions concerning autobiography in general: "What would merit inclusion in your autobiography?" and "How would you want a reader of your biography to feel about you when they are done?" This pair of questions highlights two essential facts about autobiographies: first, that authors pick and choose what they include and what they exclude; one could not possibly include everything that has ever happened in one's life in their autobiography, and no one would want to read it if they did! Second, they foreground that authors of autobiographies construct a particular impression of themselves for the reader; they inevitably have an idea of how they wish the reader to perceive them at the end. Autobiographies are thus inevitably rhetorical, shaping a picture of their subject through both content (what is included) and form (the way in which the material is organized).

Anyone Can Be Ben Franklin and So Can You!

Thinking about what one would include and exclude from one's own autobiography and how one might organize that information is a particularly useful exercise prior to considering Franklin's

Autobiography because it highlights just how unusual one of the most famous autobiographies in world literature actually is. Attending first to organization, it is important to note that Franklin's autobiography is *not* divided up into chapters built around particular turning points—the conventional structure of Western autobiographies; the divisions in Franklin's text merely mark when Franklin started and stopped writing each section. Why Franklin eschews chapter divisions is a topic to which I will return below.

In terms of content, it is then interesting to consider what is missing from Franklin's autobiography (always a lot harder to think about than what is present!). Details of childhood and family life are typically included in autobiographies, so it may be surprising to realize that we learn next to nothing about Franklin's mother, except that she had “an excellent constitution,” having suckled all ten of her children (9). This is similarly the case with the rest of Franklin's family. He tells us that his father had a total of seventeen children by two wives. Franklin was the youngest son and third youngest overall, and could remember sitting together with 13 of his siblings (5). Apart from his brother James, however, to whom Franklin was indentured, we learn nothing about any of them.

The realization that Franklin tells us almost nothing about his family life as a child then precipitates two more questions: why does he omit this information, and what does he in fact include? The answer to the first question—he omits consideration of his early family life because it isn't important to his overall purpose—is telling: it prompts the recognition that his autobiography *has a purpose*—that is, it seeks to persuade the reader to think and feel in particular ways, and he has included or excluded material in relation to that overall purpose. A focus on what he does include from his childhood then helps to direct consideration of that purpose: he mentions an early example of his “public spirit” (7) in which he and some other boys pilfered stones from a building site to build a wharf and from which he learned the lesson that honesty is essential in dealing with the world. Mostly, however, he emphasizes his disciplined approach to *self-education*, and he starts to share the wisdom he acquired concerning how to influence people. The

information Franklin provides on his childhood in the early pages of the *Autobiography* thus emphasizes three important themes to the *Autobiography* overall: the importance of honesty in one's dealings with others, the centrality of education to success, and ways to win friends and influence people. This may be a work of fact, but it absolutely has a purpose.

Having observed that Franklin has almost nothing to say about his family leads to a related question: what kinds of relationships does Franklin include in his *Autobiography*? Many might consider romantic relationships, including courtship and marriage, as reasonable inclusions for their autobiographies—but not Franklin. We get glimpses—his future wife Deborah Read observing the ridiculous sight of young Franklin entering Philadelphia with his three puffy rolls of bread, Franklin's ill-advised flirtations in London with Mrs. T., his return to Philadelphia and marriage to Deborah—which saved him “intrigues with low women” (62). But Franklin is never romantic or sentimental and gives us very little insight into his personal life, courtship of Miss Read, or marital life before and between his trips to London. Why not? Because the focus of his *Autobiography* is not on passion, but rather the exact opposite: the dangers of ungoverned emotion and undisciplined behavior.

Franklin does, of course, tell us about some of his friends and the partnerships into which he entered—and all of them teach Franklin (and the reader) a lesson through a flaw or fault or, less often, a virtue. His employer, Samuel Keimer, in Philadelphia, for example, goes into debt and runs off to Barbados; his friend John Collins has problems with drinking and gambling; Franklin makes a business partnership with Hugh Meredith, but Meredith fails to keep up his end of the bargain; Governor Keith fails to provide the letters of credit he has promised Franklin; his friend James Ralph who travels to London with Franklin abandons his wife and child in Philadelphia, and so on. Against these negative examples, Franklin also introduces the reader to the merchant Mr. Denham who we learn had accumulated debt but, as soon as he could, paid off his creditors with interest. Franklin's anecdotes always have a pedagogical motivation—when he mentions his interactions with other people,

it is to provide examples of behavioral traits that will either assist or retard the attainment of material success. He is picking and choosing events from his past to include in the *Autobiography* that offer illustrations of the lessons he wishes the reader to appreciate.

There is, of course, a lot more that could be addressed here about Franklin; suffice to say, Franklin ends up as our paradigmatic “self-made man” and exemplar of the notion of the American dream that would be codified in the later nineteenth century by the rags-to-riches narratives of Horatio Alger. Franklin’s autobiography is, of course, a “factual” accounting of his experience, but one told from his perspective and with the increasing awareness that his success story will be seen as a model for others. With this in mind, he carefully constructs his account to emphasize particular lessons—among them, the importance of education, the virtue of self-reliance, the necessity of keeping one’s emotions in check, the utility of visible industry, and, as Franklin himself puts it, the “utmost importance” of “*truth, sincerity and integrity* in dealings between man and man . . . to the felicity of life” (52). Eschewing dramatic turning points, Franklin instead organizes his experience in the *Autobiography* as the gradual step-by-step accumulation of wisdom on the path to success.

Crucially, although obviously a genius, Franklin takes pains to downplay his exceptional abilities. “The reader,” asserts Ormond Seavey, “is invited to think that Franklin was a representative figure of his times, gifted only with a greater capacity for hard work than most” (103). The text, explains Seavey, “leads its readers to believe that it is perfectly natural to be Benjamin Franklin; anyone else, at any later date, can do it too” (9). Franklin’s *Autobiography*, in the end, becomes one of the most successful “self-help” books in American history—call it *The American Dream for Dummies*. Form and content conspire to lead the reader to appreciate the lessons Franklin wishes to convey through his life experience. The *Autobiography* is an exercise in rhetorical strategy from start to finish.

“No Compromise with Slavery!” Douglass’s Narrative

Frederick Douglass’s *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, like Franklin’s *Autobiography*, is similarly a *tour de force* of rhetorical persuasion—and the place to start with Douglass’s *Narrative* is with the title. Why is the “written by himself” part important? Because, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. observes in *The Signifying Monkey*, debates about literacy and literature were central to the debate over slavery. Gates writes that “At least since 1600, Europeans had wondered aloud whether or not the African ‘species of men,’ as they most commonly put it, could ever create formal literature, could ever master the arts and sciences.” “If they could,” continues Gates, “then . . . the African variety of humanity and the European variety were fundamentally related. If not, then it seemed clear that the African was destined by nature to be a slave” (129). The “written by himself” part of Douglass’s title is, therefore, part of the argument against slavery—it is an assertion, right from the title page, that this man of African descent possesses the intellectual capacity to express himself clearly and eloquently in writing, which then calls into question racial hierarchies that construe Africans and their descendants as subhuman due to a lack of intellectual sophistication.

The attitude that prevailed in the American South concerning slaves and literacy, it is worth noting, was curiously incoherent. On the one hand, the basic assumption was that slaves lacked the intellectual wherewithal to master literacy; indeed, “paternalistic” argument for slavery presented slaves as simple and childlike. At the same time, slaveholding states were never entirely persuaded by this argument and many adopted anti-literacy laws leading up to the Civil War. Since one doesn’t need to outlaw something that can’t happen, it seems clear that many Southern whites weren’t entirely convinced by paternalistic arguments and did indeed acknowledge the intellectual capacity and potential of persons of African descent—and a literate slave population was a threat for eminently practical reasons: literate slaves could engage in various forms of subterfuge (forging free papers, for example) and organizing across

CRITICAL READINGS

Canonization and Its Discontents: *Narrative of the Life* in the Context of Douglass's Intellectual Development

David Lawrimore

In the winter of 1845, Frederick Douglass took a break from the antislavery lecture circuit and returned to Lynn, Massachusetts. Here, “in the enjoyment of freedom and the happiness of home,” he wrote his first autobiography (*Narrative* 28). *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself* (1845) was an instant success, selling five thousand copies in its first four months, eleven thousand by the end of 1847, and thirty thousand by 1860 (Blight 139). And while it was overlooked for the better part of the twentieth century, *Narrative of the Life* is now—and has been for over four decades—an essential part of American literary study: there are approximately four hundred editions of Douglass's *Narrative* in print (including books, e-books, and audiobooks); it appears in all of the major American literature anthologies; and it frequently serves as the prime example of African American writing in American literature courses (Levine 24). Given its success and sheer ubiquity, it comes as no surprise that *Narrative of the Life* has achieved canonical status: scholars view it as the best and most exemplary antebellum slave narrative and one of the most important works of African American literature.

Of course, the canonization of *Narrative of the Life* was a necessary corrective to an American canon that was once almost exclusively white and male. However, the narrative's position as the premier exemplar and prototype of African American literature is not without its problems. Deborah E. McDowell, for example, has argued that the emphasis on *Narrative of the Life* has led to the exclusion of many African American women's narratives. Similarly, Mike Drexler and Ed White have argued that because Douglass's narrative is embraced as the paradigmatic example, other texts are seen as a gradual move toward or away from the

Douglass paradigm. “Intermediate narratives,” they argue, are simply “fine-tunings on the way to Douglass” (Drexler and White 3). *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), for example, is often portrayed as an important but flawed first step on the way to *Narrative of the Life*. Similarly, *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball* (1836) is frequently praised for its expansive description of plantation life, but critics frequently note that it lacks *Narrative of the Life*’s psychological depth. And *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave* (1847) has the dubious honor of being heralded as an ironic metacommentary on Douglass’s narrative. Most criticisms of the narrative’s canonization, then, consider how the intense focus on this one text obscures and minimizes other works of African American literature.

The goal of this essay is a bit narrower. Rather than discuss how the emphasis on *Narrative of the Life* also misrepresents African American literature writ large, I am interested in how this emphasis also misrepresents Frederick Douglass, the individual. Many readers believe that *Narrative of the Life* is a representative portrait; however, for more than fifty years *after* the publication of his most famous text, Douglass continued writing and speaking, and, in that half-century, he frequently shifted his allegiances and altered his beliefs. Moreover, as time passed, it became increasingly clear that Douglass was not especially proud of his first autobiography. Not only did he revise it twice after its initial publication—as *My Bondage and My Freedom* in 1855 and as *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* in 1892—but he also diminished the narrative in those revisions, referring to it as a “pamphlet” in *My Bondage and My Freedom* and a “little book” in *Life and Times* (Bondage 370; Life 547). Put another way, the prominence of *Narrative of the Life*, which Douglass wrote when he was “all of twenty-seven years old and a member of an anti-slavery organization he would soon renounce,” has the potential not only to overshadow his other important works but to compress his dynamic career into a single moment (Levine 5).

So, instead of viewing *Narrative of the Life* as representative of either African American literature or of Douglass the individual, this essay views the narrative as the starting point of Douglass's long and dynamic career. Specifically, I reconsider *Narrative of the Life*'s most famous scene, "The Battle with Mr. Covey," in the context of Douglass's later writings. This juxtaposition reveals how the scene contains seeds of two competing ideals—self-reliance and black community—that crystallize, though never fully resolve, as Douglass matures. While this essay focuses primarily on "The Battle with Mr. Covey," this method has the potential to yield similar results when applied to other scenes. Therefore, I conclude by offering a brief glimpse at how some of the narrative's other scenes can be examined in light of his later writings. Before turning to "The Battle with Mr. Covey," however, I work to demystify *Narrative of the Life*'s "hypercanonical" status by outlining the constraints of the slave narrative genre as well as Douglass's limited role within the abolitionist circles that published his first narrative (Levine 10).

Black Lives and White Institutions

When Douglass began writing *Narrative of the Life*, he had a number of examples to draw from. Beginning in the mid-1700s, enslaved Africans and African Americans, many of whom had escaped bondage, had written or dictated accounts of their enslavement, and, by the 1840s, over thirty of these slave narratives were in circulation. As more of these works were published, moreover, a "master outline" of the genre began to take shape (Olney 50). And, in order to adhere to this outline, a slave narrative must contain a specific list of front and backmatter—engraved portrait, generic title, appendices of documentary material—as well as a number of episodes and conventions, including a story about the struggle to become literate, an account of the nature of whippings, discussions of "Christian" slaveholders, and more (Olney 50–51). On the one hand, this outline was, for Douglass and other slave narrative authors, an "invitation to form," guidance in the difficult process of putting life to paper (Guillén 109). And Douglass adheres to these conventions so closely that *Narrative of the Life* has been called

“the fullest, most exact representative” of the slave narrative genre (Olney 51).

On the other hand, the slave narratives genre, even more than other genres, limits authors in what they can say, and how they can say it. Because the purpose of the slave narrative is to give an objective portrait of “slavery as it is,” the structure of these texts is largely predetermined: the theme is to be the reality of slavery and the need to abolish it; the content is to be a series of events that depict the reality of slavery; and the form is to be a chronological, episodic narrative that begins with an assertion of the slave’s existence (Olney 53). As James Olney explains, “. . . the slave narrative, with a very few exceptions, tends to exhibit a highly conventional, rigidly fixed form that bears much the same relationship to autobiography in a full sense as painting by numbers bears to painting as a creative act” (48). By its very design, then, *Narrative of the Life* could never fully capture Douglass’s individual identity. The slave narrative’s “master outline” serves not just as an “invitation to form,” but as an obstacle to originality, keeping at its center a particular form of experience that pushes Douglass’s unique and distinctive identity to the periphery.

Moreover, slave narratives tend to be so formulaic because they were initially created to perpetuate the worldview of the narratives’ white publishers and sponsors, not the black authors’. Specifically, early slave narratives were initially developed to validate such predominantly white institutions as the church and the prison system, even though many of these institutions were designed to disenfranchise black and enslaved people. “White American institutions are thus deeply inscribed in the early slave narratives,” John Sekora argues, “to the extent that they will be published only when they bear the imprimatur as well as the nihil obstat of these institutions” (491). The only way for an enslaved person to publish their life story, in other words, was to play by a specific set of rules. And while, by the 1830s, most slave narratives were written in the service of another white institution—abolitionist societies—the genre’s problematic relationship to white culture persisted. Of course, these societies, whose express goal was the immediate

abolition of slavery in the United States, were more sympathetic to slave narratives' black authors than previous institutions. However, abolitionist societies were still *white* institutions, and they would only record and circulate the stories of black authors that "were conformable to popular and familiar patterns of Anglo-American literary form" and that worked within the parameters of these societies' ideology (Sekora 492). Antebellum slave narratives were created mainly to exemplify and narrativize the white abolitionists' antislavery message. The author was simply a "witness," Sekora explains, "no more, no less" (502). Black lives only mattered when they perpetuated the worldview of white institutions.

Narrative of the Life is a prime example of these issues. Douglass's main sponsor when writing the narrative was William Lloyd Garrison, the head of the Boston Anti-Slavery Society and eventual founder of the American Antislavery Society. As a leader, Garrison was particularly strict, requiring "black leaders to be strong enough to control their followers, yet sufficiently weak not to challenge *him*" (Sekora 508). This was especially true for Douglass. According to Douglass's biographer, William McFeely, "Douglass. . . and other black antislavery speakers were always treated as visiting artists in a production of which the white Bostonians never dreamed of losing their direction" (108). Even Douglass, in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, discusses the limitations members of the Boston Anti-Slavery Society placed on him: "During the first three or four months, my speeches were almost exclusively made up of narrations of my own personal experience as a slave. 'Let us have the facts,' said the people. So also said Friend George Foster, who always wished to pin me down to a simple narrative. 'Give us the facts' said Collins, 'we will take care of the philosophy'" (367).

In no small part because of these restrictions, Douglass's once "slavish adoration" to Garrison and the Boston Anti-Slavery Society began to change not long after the publication of *Narrative of the Life (Bondage 390)*. Describing this shift, he writes, "To those with whom I had been in agreement and in sympathy, I was now in opposition. What they held to be a great and important truth, I