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Narrative

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Frederick Douglass in Ireland: the Dublin Edition of His *Narrative*

The year 1845 was pivotal for Frederick Douglass. With urging from friends in the Anti-Slavery Society in Boston, he published his autobiography *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Although already recognized as the pre-eminent antislavery authority on the abolitionist lecture circuit, when Douglass issued his life story as a book, he gave his life a further measure of lasting influence. Without a doubt, publication further advanced Douglass's reputation as a formidable campaigner for African-American freedom. Despite such acclaim, however, his capacity to be a leader was hard won. In 1845 Douglass was also embroiled in circumstances aggravated by both proslavery and antislavery proponents that hampered his ability to move the United States in the direction he envisioned. Eventually, physical attacks by the public, unjust organizational practices of the Anti-Slavery Society, and fugitive slave laws, which instigated and codified prejudicial behavior and beliefs, necessitated Douglass's departure from the United States for Europe to continue his work for slavery's abolition. Douglass hoped to win Europeans over to the abolitionist cause in greater numbers and they, in turn, could exert an influence on American domestic policy that sanctioned slavery.

The hostile environment that Douglass lived in was also beginning to take a toll on his morale. In one of his first letters to William Lloyd Garrison from abroad, he specifically alludes to his state of emotional distress as well as to his hope that, in leaving the United States, he would achieve the liberation necessary to lead the nation toward change. Douglass wrote, "You know one of my objects in coming [to Europe] was to get a little repose, that I might return home refreshed and strengthened, ready to be able to join you vigorously in the prosecution of our holy cause."¹ He hoped that interaction with Europeans who were committed to antislavery objectives would lift his spirits with regard to human values and replenish his energy so he could eventually return home to continue to fight.

Although it is common knowledge that, with the publication of his *Narrative*, in 1845, Douglass left for Europe, what is less recognized is that his first

1. *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1950), p. 120; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (*LWFD* 1: 120).

port-of-call, outside of a night spent in England, was Ireland. Indeed, Douglass stayed for nearly six months and found in Ireland supporters who were more than willing to encourage him and his mission in constructive ways. Such interest ultimately helped to instill in Douglass the assurance that enabled him to formulate and articulate a democratic vision for the United States. Specifically, in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison, which was subsequently reproduced in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), Douglass wrote about the impact of Ireland on his morale as he detailed his journey through the country. While recounting his experiences as he traveled from Cape Clear in Munster to the Giant's Causeway in Ulster, Douglass said he had spent some of the "happiest moments" of his life. "I seem to have undergone a transformation," he explained. "I have a new life."² These words were later reproduced almost verbatim by Douglass in the Dublin edition of his *Narrative* published in 1846 where he credited his "new life" as the reason he so fearlessly argued against slavery while touring Europe. Although from a young age he possessed the inclination to be a leader, Ireland was the site where this trait blossomed, free of the concern of retribution.

That Douglass's experiences in Ireland were both personally beneficial and professionally productive might be regarded with certain degree of suspicion, given the popular assumption that African-American and Irish relations contain more rancor than goodwill. It is important to note, however, the Douglass's direct contact with the Irish at fundamental moments during his childhood and adolescence at times bolstered, and perhaps sparked, his resolve to become a free man. For instance, the Irish are often introduced in his writing during crucial moments when he sought his own freedom as well as an end to slavery throughout the United States. When the Irish first appear in the *Narrative*, they are instrumental in prompting some of his early desires to escape bondage. While working at the Durgin and Bailey shipyard in Baltimore for his master Hugh Auld, Douglass describes how he noticed "two Irishmen" unloading "a scow of stone" one day and offered his help. While they worked, one of the men asked "Are ye a slave for life?" When Douglass replied that he was, the "good Irishman seemed [. . .] deeply affected" by his response and said "it was a pity [. . .]." Both advised him to run north and said he would find friends there and be free.³ Although Douglass partially distrusted their advice, for fear they were part of an oft-used ploy to encourage slaves to escape in order to reap a fugitive

2. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, in *Autobiographies*, ed. Henry Lewis Gates, Jr. (New York: Library of America, 1994), p. 373; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (A 373).

3. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845), in *Autobiographies*, pp. 43–44; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (A 43–44).

reward, his conversation with the two Irish laborers caused him to resolve “from that time to run away” (A 44).

Almost simultaneous with Douglass’s direct contact with the two men on the wharf, another experience occurred that equally influenced his yearning for freedom and similarly involved the Irish. While he secretly practiced reading in the attic of the Auld house after his work day in the shipyard, he came upon a speech in the *Columbian Orator* on Catholic emancipation in Ireland which had been delivered by Arthur O’Connor in the Irish House of Commons.⁴ Douglass was impressed by O’Connor’s sentiments and his declaration that he would “risk everything dear to [him] on earth” for Ireland’s independence. Douglass wrote that O’Connor provided him with a powerful vocabulary to voice beliefs within his “own soul” which “boldly” vindicated human rights and “enabled” Douglass “to utter thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery” (A 42). O’Connor demonstrated to Douglass the powerful way that language can provoke a nation toward change.

While his contact with the Irish profited Douglass during his formative years, his abolitionist speaking tour through Ireland later in his life gave him firsthand experience with the indigenous Irish and also rejuvenated his sense of the valuable contribution that words can make to larger political transformation. Douglass was particularly taken with the skillful oratory of Daniel O’Connell, a lawyer who had effectively mobilized masses of poor Catholics into a political force that ultimately called for the repeal of Ireland’s union with England. In *Life and Times* (1893), the third version of his autobiography, Douglass recalled that, prior to his own experience witnessing O’Connell speak, he thought his power was “greatly exaggerated.”⁵ However, when O’Connell invited Douglass to Conciliation Hall in Dublin, Douglass wrote, “his eloquence came down upon the vast assembly like a summer thunder-shower upon a dusty road” (A 682). He especially marveled at the way O’Connell’s delivery captivated his audience and influenced its actions. Douglass wrote, “[O’Connell] held Ire-

4. In his *Narrative*, Douglass credits Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816) as the author of the speeches that he read in the *Columbian Orator* which addressed Catholic Emancipation in Ireland. However, a piece from Sheridan bears little resemblance to that which Douglass writes of in his *Narrative*. Instead, a portion of a speech by Arthur O’Connor in “favour of the Bill for Emancipating the Roman Catholics” (1795) seems closer in subject to the text that Douglass recalls. Albert E. Stone writes that “memory has played [Douglass] slightly false,” and he confirms that the speech that Douglass refers to is by O’Connor, rather than Sheridan. Albert E. Stone, “Identity and Art in Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative*,” in *Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass*, ed. William J. Andrews (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1991), p. 71.

5. *The Life and Times and Frederick Douglass* (1893), in *Autobiographies*, p. 682; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (A 682).

land within the grasp of his strong hand, and [he] could lead it whithersoever [*sic*] he would [...]" (A 682). It was an example worth emulating.⁶

Beyond the incidental moments described in his autobiographies, Douglass's letters and speeches indicate that, throughout his life, his association with the Irish functioned as a critical component to his own liberation. Furthermore, his relationship with members of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society, considered the most ardent abolitionists in Europe, and his contact with ordinary Irish citizenry in Ireland, who for the most part heartily received him and his mission, assisted his capacity to write of his own experiences in slavery. Their impact on his life becomes especially evident in a variant edition of his *Narrative* published in Dublin. Scholarship concerning Douglass has only briefly alluded to this 1846 text and never in a way that connects it with its Irish origins. Archival research in both Ireland and Boston, as well as scrutiny of Douglass's letters, reveals how Douglass's association with the Irish resulted in a new preface and appendix to the *Narrative* which ultimately demonstrate a shift in the author's sense of self that bespeaks his emerging position as a world champion of human rights.

From the outset, when Douglass accepted the invitation of leaders from the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society to visit Ireland, the treatment he was given by everyday Irish men and women as well as the receptions he received during his lectures was a welcome change. Even on the *Cambria*, which Douglass sailed aboard to Europe, there was evidence that his reception in Ireland would be different from the treatment to which he was accustomed in the United States. When an unruly mob threatened to throw him overboard for speaking against slavery, "a noble-spirited Irish gentleman" stepped up to Douglass's defense and said "that two could play at the game" (*LWFD* 1:118).⁷ Later, in another letter to Garrison, reprinted in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Douglass wrote that with

6. Like Douglass, Charles Lenox Remond was also astonished at O'Connell's rhetorical authority. He heard him speak at a meeting of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in London in June, 1840. So moved was Remond by the address that he observed that he was not an abolitionist until "I listened to the scorching rebukes of the Fearless O'Connell . . . , when before that vast assemblage, he quoted from American publications, and alluded to the American declaration, and contrasted the theory with the practice; then I was moved to think, and feel, and speak; and from his soul-stirring eloquence and burning sarcasm would every fibre of my heart contract in abominating the worse than the Spanish Inquisition system in my own." *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. C. Peter Ripley, Vol. I (The British Isles, 1830–1865) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 73.

7. In a speech delivered in Limerick on November 10, 1845, Douglass recounted the incident aboard the *Cambria* in more detail. The *Limerick Reporter* transcribed the speech in its November 11, 1845, issue. There Douglass identified the Irishman as a Mr. Gough from Dublin who "was so tall" that Douglass had to look up to him. In a digression, Douglass observed that none of the mob on the *Cambria* wished him to travel to Ireland because "they knew I would get fair play there." The audience reacted to this with cheers and Douglass went on to say that, after Mr. Gough

the passing of “eleven days and half” and the crossing of “three thousand miles of the perilous deep,” he went from being “shut out from the cabins on steam-boats” and “refused admission to respectable hotels,” to sharing cabs with white people and eating at the same dinner table (A 374). No longer did Douglass have to enter establishments through the back door or wait in back rooms.

In another letter to Garrison, Douglass said that one of the most “pleasing features” of his visit to Ireland was that there was “a total absence of all manifestations of prejudice against me, on account of my color.” As he traveled the country, he wrote that no matter where he went there was not “the slightest manifestation of that hateful and vulgar feeling against me” (LWFD 120). He also had no problems finding churches that would admit black worshipers. And within his first days in Ireland, he toured the city of Dublin without incident and had dinner with the mayor. In the letter to Garrison reprinted in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, he wrote, “No delicate nose grows deformed in my presence” (A 374). The people of Ireland, he said “measure and esteem men according to their moral and intellectual worth, and not according to the color of their skin” (A 375). He also told Garrison that in Ireland he was “not treated as a color, but as a man—not as a thing, but as a child of the common Father of us all” (LWFD 120).

Several of the people that Douglass spent the most time with while in Ireland also contributed to his profitable experiences there. While in Cork, he stayed with Thomas and Ann Jennings and their eight children for a month. Because the family were Church of Ireland members and Cork was largely Roman Catholic, William S. McFeely, in his 1991 biography *Frederick Douglass*, explains that Douglass took comfort in the fact that the Jenningses knew what it felt like to be different. He was also impressed by their lack of insecurity regarding their difference and the way they carried on as if “everyone else was out of step.”⁸ Because the Jennings family was large, there was also no time to treat Douglass with any particular favoritism. He spent evenings in their company, gossiping, arguing about reform, and enjoying music. He welcomed the honesty of the Jenningses especially when compared with the sometimes disingenuous behavior of American abolitionists. After leaving Ireland, Douglass and Isabel Jennings corresponded with one another for the rest of their lives.

In addition to the Jenningses, Douglass’s association with an Irish publisher Richard D. Webb was another crucial relationship that he established while in Ireland. More than other members of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society, Webb

stepped up to assist him, Douglass “called for three cheers for old Ireland,” to which the Limerick audience again reacted with “enthusiastic cheering.” *Frederick Douglass Papers*, ed. John W. Blassingame, Ser. 1, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 83–84.

8. William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), p. 119.

was responsible for organizing and scheduling Douglass's speaking engagements. As with the Jenningses, Douglass valued Webb for his frank honesty. According to McFeely, Douglass was accustomed to the way abolitionists often concealed their disagreements with blacks for fear that they would seem racist. Webb, on their other hand, was extremely candid with Douglass, to the point that the two often had heated arguments with each other. Race was of no consequence. "[Webb] was one of the few," McFeely says, "who did not prefer to smile benignly and then do [his] undercutting offstage. [He] was brave enough to disagree with Douglass to his face."⁹ Such open and sincere interaction between people was a refreshing change for Douglass and it worked to instill within him a more precise vision of attitudes and behavior that he hoped could be replicated in the United States when slavery was outlawed.

Although Irish efforts to end slavery were crucial, the uplift of Douglass's spirits while he toured Ireland was pivotal in his transformation into an esteemed national leader. In his letter to Garrison, he himself said, "Instead of the bright, blue sky of America, I am covered with the soft, grey fog of the Emerald Isle. I breath, and lo! the chattel becomes a man" (A 374). Douglass left Ireland for Scotland and England with his sense of self-confidence restored. Moreover, Douglass's experiences in Ireland ultimately contributed to the revitalization of his energy, enabling his return to the United States and his ability to fight for slavery's end at home.

Since the 1845 printing of the Boston text, Douglass's *Narrative* had held a special place in American literature. It also provided pragmatic benefits for its author. Money raised from its sales helped support Douglass and his family and defrayed the cost of his first trip to Europe, from August 16, 1845 to April 4, 1847. Toward that end, Richard D. Webb, the abolitionist printer from Dublin, also agreed to publish additional quantities of the *Narrative* so Douglass could readily obtain copies to sell at his various speaking engagements throughout Ireland, Scotland, and England. As with the Boston edition, the Dublin edition sold exceptionally well. An initial run of 2,000 copies in 1845 was quickly bought up. In a letter to Webb, Douglass himself expressed delight over his book's success and the pace of its sales. After a speech in Belfast, during December of 1845, he wrote that all the copies he had on hand were bought "at one blow." He told Webb, "I want more. I want more." In a letter to Maria Weston Chapman, Webb reported that Douglass earned \$750 from sales of the first Dublin edition. When the version sold out, Webb began production of 2,000 more copies for the 1846 edition.¹⁰

9. McFeely, p. 122.

10. Information concerning the sales and printing of the Dublin edition of the *Narrative* has been compiled from examples of the texts themselves and from the following sources: Houston A.

The Irish printer, however, did not have a free hand in publishing the text. Correspondence between Webb and Douglass suggests that Douglass was intimately involved in the *Narrative*'s printing. On at least two occasions during the publication of the Dublin editions Douglass is known to have invoked his authority directly in the printing process. The first involved Douglass's dissatisfaction with a portrait of himself that was used on the frontispiece of the text. He had directed an engraver to make it "shorter," yet after viewing it was still unhappy. Nonetheless, he told Webb to use it, feeling nothing more could be done (*LWFD* 5:22). The second, more contentious instance involved direct confrontation with Webb, who disagreed with Douglass over the inclusion of endorsements in the second variant by Thomas Drew and Isaac Nelson, two Presbyterian ministers from Belfast. Apparently, Webb objected because he thought they would frame the *Narrative* within a "sectarian" bias. Douglass, however, believed to leave the ministers' endorsements out because they were clergy "would be to show oneself as much and more sectarian than themselves" (*LWFD* 1:66). In fairness to Webb, his objections were the result of his acute sensitivity to Douglass's Irish audience, whose strident religious sentiments could obfuscate other concerns.¹¹ Douglass, however, was unwilling to bend and, by the time the text went to print, the two clerical endorsements followed eight others by newspapers such as the *New York Tribune* and the *London Atlas*.

Douglass's involvement in the production of his *Narrative* in Dublin, especially the 1846 text, is important for reasons that reach beyond the cosmetic and marketing concerns that he had in relation to the volume. In particular, the second Irish version contains a new preface and appendix that were not part of the Boston printing and that demonstrate an attitude of self-confidence and self-possession that was not apparent or even available for Douglass to invoke before his stay in Ireland. Although Douglass often expressed his belief that he had a right to have a say in decisions that directly related to and reflected upon his life, his status as a slave negated opportunities to act on such convictions. In Ireland, however, where he was free to behave and speak as he desired, Douglass's capacity to manage his own affairs flourished. Because the amendments to the

Baker, Jr.'s introduction to the *Narrative* (1845) (A 9, 19, 21); *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Vol. 1, pp. 292–92; Foner's *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 1, p. 431 and Vol. 5 (1975), p. 13; Richard Harrison, *Richard Davis Webb: Dublin Quaker Printer 1805–1872* (Cork: Red Barn Publishing, 1993), p. 50; and Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974).

11. According to Richard S. Harrison, Webb was never comfortable with the way that Irish society divided itself along "sectarian lines." As a Quaker, Webb did not interpret "religious or political affairs" in the same way as Daniel O'Connell or as other Roman Catholics did, or as did "conventional Orange or Protestant factions." Eventually, Webb resigned from the Quaker community unable to reconcile even their "viewpoints" with his own. Harrison, pp. 2–3.

second Dublin edition of his *Narrative* are significant, and were placed within the text by Douglass himself, the text is one of the first material manifestations of the control he sought in staking out his place in the world.

While the Dublin variant of the *Narrative* signifies Douglass's personal aspirations, the text is also inextricably linked to his antislavery objectives, objectives that would have an impact on the entire United States. Douglass viewed individual human will and action as the primary agents of social change. Because the two are so intimately related, one had to continually assess whether one's actions benefited the greater population. Consequently, the right to control his own destiny was as much a part of Douglass's democratic vision for the entire United States as it was a personal conviction. In turn, the inclusion of the new preface and appendix in the second Dublin edition of his *Narrative* are emblematic of the political and social changes that he sought to engender throughout the United States.

In particular, Douglass's use of specific discursive methodologies in the Dublin text tacitly demonstrates his assertion of command over his own destiny. Part of the preface and the entire appendix are devoted to an exchange between Douglass and A. C. C. Thompson, which initially had occurred in the form of letters made public through national newspapers.¹² The rhetorical technique that Douglass employed in creating a dialogue out of the letters with Thompson fundamentally speaks to his desire to seize and manage his own affairs. In short, the form secured "evidence" of a slave's "manhood" because it enabled him to exercise and exhibit the human capacity to reason.¹³ This is not to say that, prior to Thompson's initial letter, Douglass did not conceive of himself a man. Indeed, much of his *Narrative* is devoted to such an assertion. The value of the dialogue between Thompson and Douglass was that through it, Thompson, a supporter of slavery, unwittingly corroborated such an assertion

12. Although he initially misspells Thompson's name as "Thomson," Blassingame gives his full name as Absalom Christopher Columbus Americus Vespuccius Thompson. When he wrote his letter to the *Delaware Republican* in 1845, Thompson was then living in Wilmington. He had, however, lived on the farm of his father, Dr. Absalom C. Thompson, at the same time that Douglass was working on a "neighboring farm which Edward Covey was renting" (*FDP* 2:201–2). Blassingame documents the reprinting of the "refutation" of Douglass's *Narrative* in the *Liberator* (12 December 1845) as well as in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (25 November 1845). Douglass replied first in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison (27 January 1846), which Garrison then printed in the *Liberator* (27 February 1846). Thompson once again sought to discredit Douglass's story in a letter to the *Albany Patriot* that included statements from other citizens of Saint Michael's verifying Thompson's original version. This letter was also reprinted in the *Liberator* (20 February 1846). Douglass's first letter to Garrison is also available in Foner (*LWFD* 1:129–34).

13. Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Carla L. Peterson, "We Hold These Truths to Be Self-Evident," in *Frederick Douglass: New Literacy and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 193.

of “manhood.” When it came time for the second Dublin edition to be published, Douglass could not resist the chance to expose such evidence to the world. The dialogue format allowed him to assert his own humanity; it served to heighten the fact that the very premise upon which slavery was based—the dehumanization of the slave—was faulty.

The profound lucidity Douglass exemplified in the Dublin *Narrative* also proved effective beyond the customary function of a slave narrative which was, in part, to condemn slavery’s supporters. In the 1846 edition, he exposed the hypocrisy among his more liberal-minded countrymen and women, including abolitionists. Prior to Douglass’s trip to Ireland, he was surrounded by racist circumstances that were a consequence of accepted ways of life, modes of behavior, and manners of speech in the everyday American world: the enforcement of Jim Crow practices on boats and trains and in churches from New York to New Hampshire, as well as racist jokes, cold handshakes, slips of the tongue, and the spurious side-comments that accompanied Douglass as he traversed the country to speak of his experiences as a slave.

Abolitionists, themselves, were not immune from promulgating such indecorous behavior, although their conduct was usually accompanied by patronizing elements and notions of paternalism. In Douglass’s correspondence, an experience with Maria Weston Chapman of the Boston Anti-Slavery Society illustrates such tendencies. Prior to Douglass’s arrival in Ireland, Chapman wrote a letter to Richard D. Webb, the publisher, warning him to “keep an eye” on Douglass, afraid that he would be “won over” by those in the English anti-slavery movement who did not support William Lloyd Garrison. Maria Chapman’s comments suggest that Douglass, even with all of his expertise, was incapable of thinking for himself and would be unable to maintain the “proper” course of action advanced by the American Anti-Slavery Society without the constant guardianship of white people involved in the movement. Webb later showed the letter to Douglass, who, in turn, became “furious” with Chapman and said that her “suspicions stuck in [his] crop” and that he could not “get [them] ‘down’ no how.” He wrote Chapman a “sharp” reply saying that he would not “tolerate any efforts to supervise and control his activities” (LWFD 1:65, 142–44, 431). The exchange demonstrates the insidious ways that abolitionists sometimes imposed themselves upon former slaves. Likewise, it indicates the lengths that Douglass was willing to go in order to assert a sense of himself on his own terms. Even though Douglass was abroad when he learned of Chapman’s letter, it reminded him of the ways that racism pervaded the United States.

The production of the second Dublin *Narrative* provided Douglass with an opportunity to challenge the less blatant practitioners of discrimination, such

as Chapman. Again, Douglass's skill with the rhetorical conventions of the day infused his chastisement with his particular brand of tenacity. In addition to using the artifice of a dialogue, which had been so effective with Thompson, he used the habit of prefacing a slave narrative to expose the prejudicial practices of abolitionists and their supporters. Usually the ancillary documents attached to slave narratives, like a preface or appendix, were authored by white people as a means to guarantee the credibility of the featured text. Since African Americans were granted an inferior status which was maintained even by abolitionists, blacks were deemed unsuitable authors in their own right. To remedy—as well as reinforce—such beliefs, such white voices Garrison's and Wendell Phillips's in Douglass's text, functioned “as seals of white approval.”¹³ Even though it was desirable for ex-slaves to write their stories, dominant racist doctrine still mandated that relationship be established whereby whites functioned as those who sanctioned black voices.

Prior to the publication of the second Dublin edition, Douglass had expressed displeasure with the practice of including the words of white people solely to establish a narrative's credibility. Moreover, it is also possible to see that Douglass possessed an effective ability to subvert such practices. In fact, many scholars have accorded his *Narrative* distinction, without reference to the second Dublin variant, because Douglass undermines, to use Linda Alcoff's distinction, the “discursive authority” granted to particular speakers because of their place in the social hierarchy.¹⁴ With the Boston edition, however, scholars had to ferret out the way that Douglass's eloquence intrinsically eclipses the endorsements of his white champions.¹⁵ In the Dublin variant, Douglass himself boldly draws attention to the practice of privileging one speaker's words over another's and mocks the power accorded specific social markers such as race.

In the appendix, Douglass sarcastically praises Thompson for doing “a piece of anti-slavery work, which no anti-slavery man could do.” Because abolitionists are believed to be “fanatical, and apt to see everything through a distorted medium,” Douglass chides that “cautious and truth-loving people in New England” do not believe their testimony. On the other hand, “slaveholders, or their

14. Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” *Cultural Critique*, 20 (Winter, 1991–92), 3.

15. Robert B. Stepto, in particular, has long argued that Douglass's text is unusual because his powerful voice dominates the preface by Garrison and the letter by Phillips, in spite of their social as well as self-imposed superiority. Douglass alone, writes Stepto, assures the credibility of his *Narrative*, and in so doing he creates a text of “very special order.” Stepto, however, limits his argument to the Boston edition, excluding the way the ancillary texts in the Dublin edition also function as distinguishing features. Robert B. Stepto, “Narration, Authentication, and Authorial Control in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of 1845*,” in *African-American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. William L. Andrews (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1991), pp. 26–28.

apologists,” such as Thompson, are believable because they are somehow credited with being “impartial, dispassionate, and disinterested witnesses.”¹⁶ Douglass also demonstrates his sense of irony as he credits Thompson’s whiteness, even though it is bathed in the treachery of slavery, as the force that lends the new appendix authority.

Douglass’s relentless scoffing ultimately renders Thompson’s undeserved privilege, as well as that of Garrison and Phillips, impotent alongside his own more commanding deftness. Douglass usurps Thompson’s words and manipulates the rhetorical conventions such as dialogues and ancillary texts to his own advantage. These tactics allowed him even more room to speak for himself, wresting authority from those who sought to deny his right to wholly define his own situation. Acting as a definer rather than the defined, Douglass asserted that blacks were capable of thinking and acting on their own behalf. Furthermore, to position Thompson’s words alongside his own was entirely Douglass’s decision and signified his heightened sense of self-determination. At the end of the preface, Douglass himself boldly proclaims, “I am an American slave, who has given my tyrant the slip. I am in a land of liberty, with no man to make me afraid” (*N* vi). In Ireland, no longer literally shackled by slavery and the de facto bonds of fugitive slave laws, Douglass was able to dictate his own actions and speak for himself.

Because the first printing of Douglass’s *Narrative* in Boston has been credited as the authoritative version, interest in the second Dublin edition has been minimal, despite its significance. In fact, the insignificant attention paid to the Irish text has rendered it little more than a footnote in Douglass’s literary accomplishments. Even so, the author himself revered the edition. The new preface in the second Dublin variant is especially crucial because Douglass makes explicit the reasons why he left the United States, offering proof of the way that fugitive slave laws had limited his ability to remain free and to help end slavery. He tells his readers that with the publication of his *Narrative* in Boston, his “owner” [*sic*] could find out where Douglass resided and return him to “his ‘patriarchal care.’” He writes that although “it may not be generally known in Europe, [...] a slave who escapes from his master is liable, by the Constitution of the United States, to be dragged back into bondage [...]” (*NLFD* iii). He explained that, by fleeing overseas he avoided being captured and re-enslaved.

The Dublin variant is also significant because it assisted Douglass in broadening the influence of the antislavery mission in Europe, which ultimately strengthened the American movement. Douglass’s tour also had an impact on

16. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 2nd. Ed. (Dublin: Webb and Chapman, 1846), p. cxxvi; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (*N* cxxvi).

European anti-slavery organizations in and of themselves. Richard D. Webb, who helped found the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society and published the Irish editions of the *Narrative*, wrote about the positive influence of Douglass on those in Ireland who were initially reluctant to condemn slavery. In a letter to the Daniel O'Connell, Webb said that Douglass had "occasioned deep interest in the anti-slavery cause, and many who never thought on the subject at all, are now convinced that it is a sin to neglect" (*NLFD* lvii). Isabel Jennings, of the Jennings family of Cork with whom Douglass stayed for a month, confirmed Webb's observations. In a letter to Maria Weston Chapman, she wrote that Douglass's work resulted in contributions from the Church of England whose clergy had previously remained "silent" when appealed to by abolitionists. "They have got our old anti-slavery papers and are determined to understand the subject," she said (*NLFD* lv).

Even without the Church of England's encouragement, however, Douglass's impact in Europe was profound. "Never before have I known anyone who has excited such general interest as Frederick," wrote Jane Jennings, sister of Isabel. Likewise, John W. Blassingame notes, "Working men contributed their labor to prepare halls in which Douglass spoke, attended his lectures in significant numbers, sent antislavery petitions to the United States, and sang ballads about him." Moreover, in the second Dublin variant of his *Narrative*, Douglass appealed to those who thronged to hear him on the European lecture circuit. While recounting the tenets of fugitive slave laws in the edition's preface, he entreated his Irish readership to "co-operate with the noble band of American abolitionists" and work for "the overthrow of the meanest, hugest, and most dastardly system of iniquity that ever disgraced any country" (*NLFD* iv). The written plea was integral to abolitionist efforts to gain world-wide support to end American slavery.

The Dublin variant's new preface reinforced Douglass's public message, while the Irish text's new appendix had implications of a personal nature. In order to understand them, it is important to consider the circumstances that led Douglass to write his *Narrative* in the first place. His decision to do so lay mainly in a desire to convince people that he told the truth when he related his experiences while still in bondage. Despite the acclaim that Douglass garnered as an orator for the American Anti-Slavery Society, evidence suggests that he spoke to audiences that distrusted what he had to say, sometimes to the point that he was denied the very capacity to speak. Even though Douglass's notoriety gave him certain advantages, he was not excused from those who questioned, condemned, and disregarded the word of a black person. In *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), Douglass described how, when he delivered speeches about his experiences as a slave at anti-slavery rallies, he was continually sus-

pect because he never provided his audience with details that would allow them to identify him—details he ultimately feared would enable Thomas Auld, his Maryland master, to track him down. In light of the strictures of fugitive slave laws and the national debate surrounding fugitive slaves, it is obvious why Douglass would want to withhold certain information. With publication of his *Narrative*, however, Douglass had finally acquiesced and gave the “names of persons, places, and dates” in order to prove that what he had to say was true (A 368). Douglass’s own disclosure of specifics surrounding his enslavement, however, still did not guarantee that he would be believed. Although he hoped the publication of the Boston version would satisfy skeptics, only with the second Dublin variant did he conclusively demonstrate that his story was true. In short, the appendix, along with the preface, provided him the rare opportunity to prove his *Narrative*’s credibility. Douglass himself credited the Dublin variant as the version that put to rest all doubt as to the reliability of his claims.

Ironically, it was A. C. C. Thompson’s letters that provided Douglass with the chance to prove his story. Thompson claimed his own status as a “citizen” of Saint Michael’s, Maryland, the same region from which Douglass came, gave him the necessary authority to tell the truth. He went on to claim that the *Narrative* was written by “evil-designed” persons who pieced together the statements of a “runaway slave” into a “catalog of lies” (N cxxiii). He based his “refutation” on his assertion that the name of the runaway slave was Frederick “Bailey,” not Frederick Douglass. Thompson also contended that the “gentlemen” portrayed in the *Narrative*—Edward Lloyd, Captain Anthony, Austin Gore, Thomas Lamdin, Giles Hickey, Thomas Auld, and Edward Covey—were “charitable, feeling men” who could never “murder human beings, with as little remorse of conscience” as the *Narrative* illustrated (NLFD cxxiv). Thompson closed with confidence that he provided the public with a “true representation” of the “facts.”

Since Thompson emphasizes that his version of the truth was rooted in first-hand experience, one initially might be surprised that Douglass reacted to him with delight. After all, using abolitionist logic, it follows that Thompson’s rebuttal of Douglass could be credible because it, like Douglass’s *Narrative*, was based on first-hand experience.¹⁷ Douglass’s pleasure with Thompson, however, was derived not so much from his interpretation of the facts, which Douglass knew could always be debated, but rather that Thompson verified, albeit back-

17. Abolitionists prized slave testimony because it was believed to be far more credible than second-hand revelation. Indeed, William Lloyd Garrison states in his preface to Douglass’s *Narrative* (1845) that the text has importance because Douglass wrote it “in his own style, and according to the best of his ability, rather than to employ some one else” (A 7). For that same reason it was important to include in the title of Douglass’s text that it was “Written by Himself.”

handedly, that specific details contained in the *Narrative* were, indeed, true. He wrote that he knew Frederick Bailey as well as everyone else from Saint Michael's whom Douglass had mentioned. Ironically, Thompson ultimately vindicated Douglass.

To underscore the importance of such corroboration, Douglass, in his reply to Thompson, noted the significance of forever documenting the *Narrative's* credibility within the same pages as text, itself. Since the second Dublin variant was being readied for publication, he took the opportunity to include Thompson's accusations. On the page following the traditional end of the text, he introduced the new material, under the inconspicuous heading "Appendix," unabashedly stating that the allegations had first appeared in the *Delaware Republican*, a newspaper published very near to where Douglass spent his "early days." Douglass also said, with characteristic irony, that he took "great pleasure" in including the text for his readers because it invaluable confirmed "the main facts of [his] *Narrative*." Thompson's claim follow with the heading "Falsehood Refuted" in bold, upper case letters, while Douglass's response is next, titled simply "Reply to Mr. A. C. C. Thompson," also in bold, upper case letters.

Even though Douglass was obviously delighted with the new evidence, scholars have ignored the fact that he used the second Dublin variant to follow through with his intentions to publish it alongside his own story. In fact, Marion Wilson Starling writes that as far as she has "been able to discover" Douglass never did so.¹⁸ Likewise, both Blassingame and Philip S. Foner excluded the existence of the new preface and appendix in their collections of Douglass's papers. And Albert E. Stone identified the variant as "English."¹⁹ Moreover, since all subsequent editions of the *Narrative* have left out any appreciable reference to the Dublin volume, it seems as if it has all but been erased from the textual history. For Douglass, however, the Irish variant functioned as the edition that forever vindicated his story.

Such an unforeseen result was not the only mistake that Thompson made in his attempt to discredit Douglass. He also used Douglass's rhetorical acumen exhibited in the *Narrative* to further prove that Douglass's testimony was false. Thompson wrote that the Frederick "Bailey" he knew was "unlearned" and therefore incapable of writing. Only an "educated man," said Thompson, "who had some knowledge of the rules of grammar, could write so correctly" (*NLFD* cxxiv). Indeed, skepticism based on Douglass's eloquence was not uncommon. Douglass himself was familiar with misconceptions that commonly espoused the ignorance of former slaves. Ironically, in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Dou-

18. Marion Wilson Starling, *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1988), p. 254.

19. Stone, p. 66.

glass describes the ways abolitionists, including Garrison, appealed to him to tone down his linguistic agility in order to give his story credibility. He was especially bothered by requests to infuse his speaking voice with mannerisms that typecast black speech as ignorant. Rather than allowing him to talk the way he wanted to, antislavery leaders implored him to leave “a *little* [sic] of the plantation manner of speech” in his rhetoric in order to prove his authenticity (A 367). If Douglass talked more “black” or “plantation,” it followed that he would sound backward, and therefore be believable. Although Douglass tried to appease those who sought to constrict him within stereotypes, he also tirelessly struggled to retain his human dignity.

By the time Thompson wrote his statement, Douglass, who was now in Ireland, was no longer obligated to accommodate anyone who equated blackness with ignorance. Therefore, Thompson gave him an opportunity to respond with all of his linguistic eloquence. Douglass explained that, “Frederick the Freeman is a very different person than Frederick the Slave” (N cxxvii). When Thompson knew him, Douglass contended he was a “mere wreck,” living under the “unfavourable circumstances” of Mr. Covey, “the negro breaker, [. . .] who had beaten and bruised me so much, that my spirit was broken.” Since that time, however, Douglass writes, “have really got out of my place; that is, I have got out of slavery, which you know is ‘the place’ for negroes in Christian America” (N cxxvii). Accordingly, “freedom,” writes Douglass, “has given me new life.” He goes so far to say that, if Thompson were to meet him as a free man, Thompson probably would not recognize him. “I feel myself a new man,” Douglass wrote. As a free man, Douglass could articulate his story with his own voice, a voice that he had always possessed but was never allowed to utilize fully as a fugitive slave. Ireland, physically and spiritually, provided Douglass with one of the first platforms from which he could fully and freely speak.