SPEAKING SPACES: TROPES OF DISTANCE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVES

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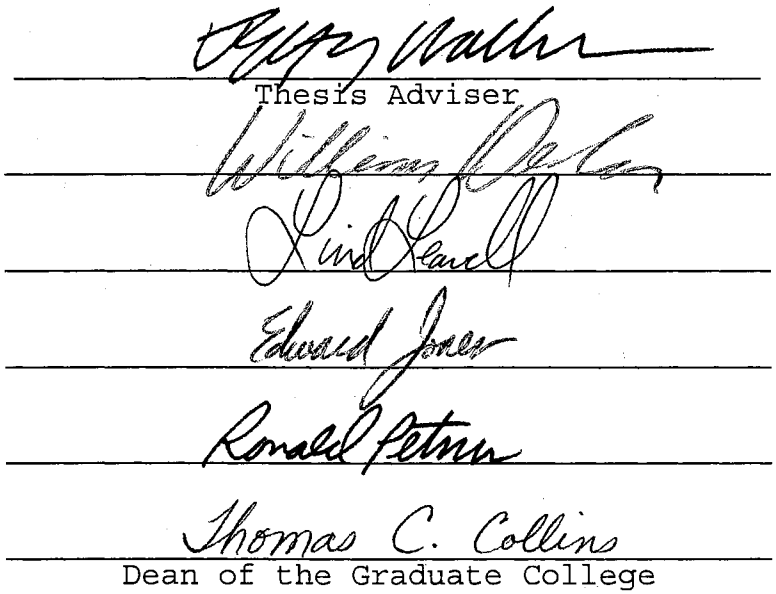

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INTRODUCTION

Marion Wilson Starling's ground-breaking 1946 work, "The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American Literary History,"[1] has helped literary critics refute the pronouncement of the historians John S. Kendall[2] and Kenneth Stampp[3] that the slaves never told us what it was like to be a slave or what went on in their minds. Since then, numerous scholars have reclaimed slave accounts from the dusty shelves of archives to explore these writings as historical evidence and as a distinct literary genre. The first published slave narrative, A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, appeared in 1760 and was followed by only a handful or two until the early 1830s, when William Lloyd Garrison started the Liberator and anti-slavery societies and other forums began vigorously encouraging more ex-slaves to publish their narratives. The momentum for publishing these accounts continued until 1865, and then with the hostility against African-Americans which followed Reconstruction, slave narratives all but disappeared from the literary world for the next fifty years.[4]

With the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, African-American forms of written expression emerged into the public arena once again. For decades, however, a prominent concern of critics was the potential interference that white editors might have made in the slaves' written and oral testimonies.

In 1918 and again in 1929, Ulrich B. Phillips, the reigning historian of American slavery, had decreed that because slave accounts were subject to so much abolitionist editing, their authenticity for describing the "peculiar institution" was doubtful (Life and Labor). Unfortunately, that opinion held sway over many historians and literary critics for years, though a few remained undaunted in their exploration of these writings.[5] As part of this latter group, Vernon Loggins in The Negro Author and His Development in America (1931) examined twenty slave narratives as literature, completed the bibliographic research necessary to establish the texts and variants of the slave narrative, and lifted out of oblivion numerous slave narratives printed before 1865.[6] Loggins' study possibly motivated the slave narrative section of the Federal Writers' Project, which began just two years later.[7]

Giving former slaves a platform upon which to speak, the Federal Writers' Project, a part of the Federal Works Progress Administration, interviewed more than 2000 ex-slaves and compiled more than 10,000 pages of testimony between 1936 and 1938. This valuable material, which was stored in the basement of the Library of Congress, was not accessible to scholars until 1944, when Benjamin A. Botkin, the chief librarian, completed his own assessment of the oral narratives.[8] These interviews have given historians the means to refute Phillips's assertion about the

unreliability of slave accounts.[9] Gaining access to these WPA interviews was difficult, however, because literary scholars and historians had to compete with each other for the use of the typescripts, which were located in the Rare Books Division of the Library of Congress.[10] The Federal Writers' Project, though, has been instrumental in lending credence to the testimony of former slaves, and from that time forth there has been a steady interest in not only the WPA interviews but the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slave narratives as well.

Despite a few notable analyses of slavery published in the 1960s,[11] significant attention on the slaves themselves did not occur until the 1970s, a development which can be explained in part by the renewed energy of the Civil Rights revolution, which prompted militant blacks and enlightened Americans to reinterpret the African-American's past in order to prepare for the future. This reinterpreting of the past meant coming to grips with the black experience, understanding how it felt to be black and a slave who had, through effort and suffering, attained some kind of freedom. To find this "past revelation," many turned to the black voices of the slave narratives.[12] The publication of three monumental works in 1972 provoked an even greater amount of scholarly interest in the genre. John W. Blassingame, in The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South, formally overturns Phillips's method of concentrating

on the Southern planter to examine the slave system and, instead, analyzes in great detail the life of the black slave from the perspective of the slave. Also arguing that the slaves created a separate black culture, Eugene D. Genovese, in Roll, Jordon, Roll: The World the Slaves Made, tells of the slaves' physical and spiritual struggles to survive and make a bearable retreat amidst the harshest and most confining circumstances. Perhaps what garnered even more critical attention to the testimonies of slaves than the work of Blassingame and Genovese was George P. Rawick's project of gathering the Slave Narrative Collection of the WPA interviews into the forty-volume publication, The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography. Because of these three publications and the subsequent reprinting of early slave narratives, scholars now had ready access to previously dormant perspectives and new avenues for exploring the black experience.

As slave narratives became increasingly popular as an area of study in the 1980s, scholars such as John Sekora and James Olney began debating whether the slave narrative should be considered a type of autobiography or both autobiography and literature (as an act of creative imagination) or neither. In contrast to Arna Bontemps,[13] both Sekora and Olney concluded that classifying the slave narrative as autobiography in the fullest sense of the term is problematic because, though the slaves were recounting

incidents within their own lives, the purpose of all of the accounts was to tell *the* story of slavery. As Sekora observes,

> . . . the abolitionist design for both lectures and narratives was a collective one: to explain slavery to an ignorant audience, not an individual life. Reviews and announcements routinely stated that 'former slaves had a simple, moving story to tell,' using the singular noun to signify a collective account. (109)

Olney and Sekora do not, however, deny that the slave narrative should be seen as a species of autobiography, although they recognize the unique constraints associated with this kind of life-writing.[14] Unfortunately, James Olney puts such heavy emphasis on the "highly conventional, rigidly fixed form" of "autobiography in a full sense" that at times he underrates the potential significance of the individual narratives to the slaves themselves, not leaving room for the possibility that they may enable the writers to experience therapeutic benefits.[15]

Amidst his examination of the conventions of slave-narrative writing, Olney does, nevertheless, articulate a noteworthy point about the individual slaves' connections with their stories. He convincingly argues that in a slave narrator's lettered utterance of his name, he asserts his own identity, the assurance of which signifies his freedom--

"freedom from slavery, freedom from ignorance, freedom from non-being, freedom even from time" (157). This connection between the slave narrators' writing and their freedom is explored further by one of the most influential scholars of African-American literature, William L. Andrews. In To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865, he draws attention to language as a generator of power, examining not so much the story as the storytelling. Andrews contends that by the middle of the nineteenth century, slave narrating developed into a kind of "literary emancipation." Through narrative discourse an ex-slave found his individual voice, a voice distinct from his master's, which enabled him to gain authority and, thus, freedom (99).

Andrews and other scholars, however, have not thoroughly defined the nature and extent of the freedom gained through the creation of a voice. Certainly it is not simply the telling of their stories that gives them liberty. To gain a better understanding of the possibilities that writing their stories held for these fugitives and manumitted slaves, one needs to look at how they tell their stories and what kinds of elements they include. This is not to say that all slave narratives will follow this same pattern, but in many slave narratives, there are a few discernible narrating strategies that critics have not fully estimated but which help to account for how these writers

realize an emancipation that the law could never grant to them. Distance and space become complex tropes through which the slave narrators negotiate their freedom and their sense of self.[16]

Distance and space have of course long figured prominently in the slaves' personal history. For hundreds of years, traders and masters had taken away the slaves' right to freedom of movement and had imposed their own spatial configurations on them for matters of profit and prejudice. Distance and space were the vehicles through which the slave holders took away their freedom; therefore, slaves would take hold of that space and also negate or regulate that distance in order to recoup or attain their freedom. The traders had violated the world of the Africans and had forcibly taken them away from their homeland, friends and families, culture, and ways of life. By imposing these various kinds of distances on the Africans, the traders enslaved them more than just as objects in space. Consequently, the slave narrators concern themselves with not only physical distance but also emotional and psychological distances. This, in turn, complicates the matters of how and when they gain their liberty.

The most readily apparent way the Africans were enslaved, and thus would try to distance themselves, was on the spatial and legal level. Often slave narrators will record different ways in which they tried to achieve a

physical distance between themselves and their masters. The two main forms this took were in their attempts to run away or to purchase their freedom. Other methods included staging revolts and trying to stay so thoroughly occupied with their work that they did not attract immediate attention or punishment from their masters.[17]

Although when slave holders bought their slaves they evaluated them according to physical dimensions, health, and appearance--seeing whether they would be strong, hearty field hands or house servants who could be show pieces to the neighbors--they also judged them, when possible, by personality, attitude, and demeanor to see whether they would be capable of exhibiting the qualities of trustworthiness and submissiveness. So the traders and slave holders were buying not only flesh and bones but also character and spirit. This is not to say that the slave holders legally owned the personalities of their purchases, but numerous masters felt they had the right to own and control everything about the slaves, including their souls. Many of them would inflict torments on slaves to break their spirits, even in the absence of anything that might be construed as insolence. With some, it was not a matter of their masters' beating them into submission, for many slaves eagerly and wholeheartedly tried to please their masters.[18] Perhaps this response can be explained either by their having comparatively kind masters, or by their trying to get

into the good graces of their masters to gain a position of authority, such as becoming a driver.[19]

Some slaves also tried to distance themselves emotionally from their masters. This emotional separation might be achieved by showing open defiance in attitude and action, doing such things as sabotaging work plans or equipment and trying to make the slave holders look weak or incompetent when visitors came to the plantations. In acting out in these ways, slaves gave notice to their owners and their immediate community that they, not the masters, still had control over their own emotional state, that they did not accept the slave holders' pronouncement that they were of an inferior race. As slaves showed this defiance, they also demonstrated to themselves that although their physical bodies might have to submit to the close supervision of their masters, the latter did not have such easy access to their feelings and sensibilities. Certainly, however, the masters exerted at least a minimal amount of power over the slaves' emotions because the nature of the slave system entailed taking away people's right to govern their own bodies, and it wrenched Africans away from those things with which they had emotional connections, such as their homeland, family, and culture; for those slaves born here in America, it affected them in much the same way.[20] Those slaves who openly defied their masters visibly demonstrated a modicum of freedom, and though they may not

have erased the imposed distance between themselves and the people or things they cherished, they did take steps toward an emotional separation from slavery. Through these acts, the slaves put up their own kind of territorial markers, showing the masters that they were no longer going to tolerate the capricious governing of their emotional beings.[21]

In addition to those slaves who respected their masters and seemingly happily served them, those who clearly despised them, and those who just passively tried to survive, there were slaves who subtly protested or peaceably challenged their bondage. They put an emotional distance between themselves and slavery by doing such things as singing spirituals and the blues, telling folk tales, "puttin' on ole massa," and practicing religion. Certainly many of the spirituals they sung while working in the fields were about God and Heaven, but cloaked under Biblical imagery, some of these spirituals referred to a freedom not just expected in the afterlife but hoped for on earth. Blassingame writes:

> As other-worldly as they often appear, the spirituals served as much more than opiates and escapist fantasies. They affirmed the slave's personal autonomy and recognized the reality of his earthly suffering. While looking beyond the dismal present to a brighter future, the spiritual

> enabled blacks to transcend degradation and to find the emotional security to endure pain. (Slave Community 145)

Singing such songs took slaves away from their immediate surroundings and transported them mentally and emotionally to a spiritual realm. They also used this medium for sending coded messages about various secret gatherings--such as dances or prayer meetings--between plantations. Not only did the spirituals serve as invitations, but they also functioned as warnings, allowing a slave to tell his or her coworkers who were taking a break that their master was approaching.[22] Although the slaves who used the spirituals in these ways were not as visibly aggressive in their revolt against their bondage as some other slaves, they nonetheless created for themselves opportunities for emotional freedom.

The blues and folk tales, likewise, were vehicles through which the slaves could momentarily move themselves away from slavery and find some relief. Heavily reliant on metaphor and circumlocution, the blues contained references to the multifarious nature of the slave experience, including work, fear, freedom, drinking, and sexual intercourse. The metaphors would be dropped for more explicit expression when the whites were not around, and through songs slaves could describe their masters' treatment of them, the disparity between the masters' fine surroundings and their own pathetic quarters, and the

deceptions they pulled on the slave holders.[23] With some of the same kinds of references to their masters, slaves told folk tales to entertain each other and to teach the younger slaves how to survive plantation life. These stories enabled them to share their dreams and to express their anger, and therefore constituted a coping strategy by which they could regulate their emotional lives:

> Through these means the slave could view himself as an object, hold on to fantasies about his status, engender hope and patience, and at least use rebellious language when contemplating his lot in life. The therapeutic value of this should not be dismissed lightly. Not only did these cultural forms give the slave an area of life independent of his master's control, they also were important psychological devices for repressing anger and projecting aggressions in ways that contributed to mental health, involved little physical threat, and provided some form of recreation.
>
> (Blassingame, Slave Community 129)

Often these stories, of which the Brer Rabbit tales are the best known, would show weak animals or characters overcoming bullies by using cunning or trickery. Identifying with the creatures who were being oppressed, the slaves found hope and an emotional release in imagining that they, too, could outwit their enemies, the slave holders.[24] The folk tales,

then, functioned as an alternate reality through which the slaves could enjoy the role of master narrator in deciding the fates of those figures representing themselves and those of the slave holders.

This interest in role playing also manifests itself in the emotionally distancing slave practice of "puttin' on ole massa." Some slaves believed they needed to perfect the art of pretense as a matter of self-defense.[25] For the slaves, showing their intelligence could be disastrous: if they appeared too smart, then they were sometimes difficult to sell because people thought they might be crafty and unruly. A tactic adopted by many slaves was to act ignorant or bewildered in the presence of their masters. By putting on the masks of respect and submissiveness, the slaves could help to avoid censure and punishment and also appeal to the slave holders' vanity and desire for control. Perhaps even more importantly, this masking enabled the slaves to have some sense of personal autonomy. The personalities and attitudes they presented to their masters were not their real ones, so they were, in effect, putting up a barrier between themselves and their owners. With these masks on, they were less vulnerable and more in control of how their masters responded to them. In hiding their true sentiments, the slaves achieved an emotional distance from their masters, placing part of themselves beyond the reach of slavery's tyrannical grip.[26]

Just as masking their true personalities gave the slaves a line of defense, so too did practicing religion. For them, Heaven represented another world, not just a future one that would eliminate all pain and suffering but one that they could also experience in the present to some degree. Though some of the slave holders forbade them to attend religious meetings, the slaves who were strong believers went anyway, though they were later beaten, because they knew that even if their masters could make their flesh jump with a whip, they could not harm their souls. Most slave holders eventually stopped beating their slaves for that "offense" and allowed them to attend services.[27] With their faith in God, the slaves found a freedom that even a Simon Legree could not rend from them. Religion not only gave them respite from slavery's dreary toil but also gave them a sense of joy, hope, and fellowship through which they could unburden themselves emotionally and become refreshed spiritually.

Upon examining slave accounts, one can detect that many of these same strategies by which the slaves distanced themselves from their masters have been retained and added to by slave narrators, a point which underscores the complexity of their bondage. In addition to wanting to distance themselves from slavery physically, these writers show a concern with emotional and psychological distances. Although they are primarily interested in realizing various

kinds of separation, they also want to make a connection with their audience. To do this, they must draw themselves closer to their readers by projecting what kinds of needs and values they have and what kinds of responses they might prompt by their narratives. Generally, the audience for slave narratives consisted of white Christian Northerners who were not well acquainted with all that slavery entailed. Most of the writers shared their narratives to showcase the injustices and horrors that slavery perpetuated and also to bolster the abolition movement or--for those writing after the Emancipation Proclamation--to eliminate prejudice and improve the conditions of the freed slaves. For them to be successful in their plans, the narrators needed to gain the sympathy and support of their readers. Accomplishing this required that they appeal to their higher nature, show good faith in their sense of justice, and demonstrate that they have values in common with their audience. As the slave narrators bridge the gap between themselves and their readers, they encourage active participation in abolitionism, and they provide confirmation that their authors are psychologically far removed from the slave holders.

To increase the psychological separation between themselves and their physical bondage, slave narrators showcase the traders, slave holders, and drivers as Others, people with whom their readers would not want to associate.

They show these people as morally reprehensible and as having characteristics, manners, and behaviors antithetical to what they and the audience would accept and value. Frequently slave narrators will figure their masters as being aligned with evil and darkness and describe them as having fiendish traits and intentions. Often these slave holders appear in the narratives as Satan's emissaries, with practically no redeemable qualities. To highlight the evil nature of their masters and to illustrate how pervasive the sufferings are among the slaves, many narrators will not just recount their own personal experiences but will refer to atrocities that their owners or other slave holders have inflicted on their fellow slaves. As they describe the slave holders as Others, they encourage and challenge their readers to respond to their narratives in ways which show that they do not condone the attitudes and actions of their oppressors. Depicting their masters as Others not only creates a repulsion in the readers but also gives the narrators a sense of psychological distance from slavery. When they speak about the cruelty of their masters, they are, at the same time, distinguishing how they themselves are different and morally superior.

The slave narratives in this study also suggest that these former slaves attain a psychological distance from slavery through the very process of writing their stories. As with many other autobiographies, these accounts may be

seen as reflecting as many as four different selves. There are two narrated selves--the enslaved self described at the beginning of the narrative and the manumitted self described at the end of the story, and there are potentially two others, the self who begins to relate the story and the self who finishes telling the story. Just as there are differences in the narrated/enslaved self from beginning to end because of the various experiences the slave has, there are changes that occur in the narrating self during the process of relating a life and reflecting upon it. In several of the narratives, the former slaves intermittently refer to themselves in the third person. Though it seldom happens, this practice should be seen as visibly demonstrating the psychological distance that the writers have put between themselves and slavery. Taking possession of themselves physically, emotionally, and mentally (not simply or necessarily in the legal sense), they have consigned their enslavement to the page. As they fix their bondage to a time and place, they disempower their former owners and become masters of their own histories and destinies.

Many of the slave writers structure their narratives according to what Hayden White has identified as Romance, taking the events in their lives and emplotting them, or shaping them, according to the meaning that they ultimately confer on them and would like their readers to see within

their accounts. Although on the surface these slave narratives seem tragic, many offer hope in their conclusions. In Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe, White provides a useful definition of this mode of emplotment:

> The Romance is fundamentally a drama of self-identification symbolized by the hero's transcendence of the world of experience, his victory over it, and his final liberation from it--the sort of drama associated with the Grail legend or the story of the resurrection of Christ in Christian mythology. It is a drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness, and of the ultimate transcendence of man over the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall. (8-9)

For the slave narrators, structuring their accounts as Romance becomes more complicated than this definition suggests because at the same time they want to show their readers and confirm for themselves that they have personally overcome the tyranny of slavery, they want to tell the collective story of slavery with all of its tragic implications. To elicit the help of their audience, they need to portray themselves as victims, but in writing their narratives they deny their sentenced status as victims. Adopting the mode of Romance to shape their histories has

the advantages of helping the writers make sense of their lives and establish themselves as victors and thereby enabling the readers to see that the seemingly hopeless situation of slavery can be changed.

Just as the tropes of distance and space help the slave narrators to forge a closer link with their audience and create distance from their oppressors (the narrative structure of Romance showing just how far removed they are from their enslaved selves), the heteroglossia of authenticating documents also enables slave narrators to reconstitute their identities and create a measure of insulation between themselves and their former masters.[28] Besides controlling their spatial arrangements, one of the primary ways that slave holders achieved supremacy over the slaves was through the regulation of their language. The fact that most masters equated language with power can be seen in their refusals to allow slaves to learn how to read and write. Slave holders feared that if slaves could write, then they could sign their own passes or free papers. To keep the slaves illiterate, then, was to maintain a degree of power and control over them. The frustration that the slaves experienced with being denied a voice can be seen in the narrators' common references to the fact that even in court they were denied a voice. Through their narratives, they not only make a platform for their own voices, but also give expression to numerous other voices which illustrate

the inhumanity of the Others and establish a larger context in which to interpret their lives. The kinds of overt heteroglossia that they frequently cite within or append to their narratives take such forms as their free papers, bulletins about their escape, citations about court cases, quotations from preachers who support and oppose slavery, and literary allusions. The inclusion of these various documents does not so much reflect an attempt to establish the authenticity of the slaves' existence, as one critic has argued,[29] as reveal an attempt on the part of the former slaves to overturn the supremacy of the masters' voices. By incorporating these documents or genre forms into their accounts, the slave narrators bolster their own voices and, figuratively turning back history, deflate the power of their oppressors.

For many slaves, gaining their freedom was not just a matter of leaving the presence of their masters, obtaining their legal free papers, or crossing the border into the Northern states. A close analysis of the slave narratives by Harriet A. Jacobs, William Craft, William Wells Brown, and Old Elizabeth illustrates the complex matter of how, when, and to what degree slaves obtain their freedom.

Harriet Jacobs's account will serve as the focal point for this study because, in addition to treating many of the common concerns of slaves, she also addresses a gender issue for female slaves, sexual harassment. As a former victim of

the sexual advances of her master, she can directly speak to having had her personal space threatened in the most intimate way. In narrating her history, then, she has one of the strongest motivations for wanting to reconfigure her spatial orientations. Each of the slave narrators in this study, however, has something to contribute to the genre.

Because Jacobs and Craft both escaped from their masters and wrote their narratives in the time period between the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the Emancipation Proclamation, they show how nebulous and elusive freedom can be. William Wells Brown, writing before the time of the Fugitive Slave Law, demonstrates how slave narrators writing before 1850 can to some degree be more certain about when they achieve physical freedom. While the first three writers in this study concern themselves with the abolition of slavery and, thus, employ more rhetorical strategies than Old Elizabeth does, this author, though perhaps less passionate in her aims, deserves attention because her narrative attests to the idea that even the emancipated narrators still grapple with the idea of liberty. Providing another dimension to the genre, Elizabeth interweaves her slave story with a spiritual autobiography and reveals religious persecution particular to her gender. Although not all slave accounts are like these, the narratives of Jacobs, Craft, Brown, and Old Elizabeth merit examination because they illustrate how some slave narrators use the

tropes of distance and space to enlarge their sense of freedom and their sense of self and by doing so define the possibilities of freedom in distinctive ways.

NOTES

[1] First researched and written for her 1946 dissertation at New York University, Starling's study has been the basis of many scholars' work since then, though not actually published until 1981, under the title The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History.

Of Starling's contributions to the study of slave narratives, William L. Andrews says, "The pioneering work of Marion Wilson Starling and Margaret Young Jackson identified the slave narrative as a literary genre and proved that it had to be taken seriously as a force in America's cultural history" (To Tell 30).

[2] Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates record the historian John S. Kendall, as late as 1939, saying in response to his own question of what it was like to be a slave:

> "We do not know. The slaves themselves never told. There were always . . . negroes who had secured their freedom . . . But they had no literary gift. If they were capable of self-analyses to the degree of distinguishing their sentiments in one estate from those in the other, they have omitted to set down the result in writing. Still less have we the story of a slave--of a slave who was nothing but a slave." (xxxi)

[3] In The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South, Kenneth Stampp claimed, "Since there are few reliable records of what went on in the minds of slaves, one can only infer their thoughts and feelings from their behavior, that of their masters, and the logic of their situation" (88).

[4] See Davis and Gates for a publication history of the slave narrative.

[5] The historians James Ford Rhodes, Harrison A. Trexler, J. Winston Coleman, Jr., and Frederic Bancroft have all deemed the slave narrative useful and reliable evidence.

[6] See Starling's discussion of Loggins's significant contribution to the study of the slave narrative (xiii-xiv).

[7] Starling, Davis and Gates suggest a causal relationship between Loggins' efforts and the slave narrative division of the Federal Writers' Project.

[8] Botkin's essay on the WPA interviews, "The Slave as His Own Interpreter," and his book which examined the folklore present in these oral narratives (Lay My Burden Down) were both published in 1944.

[9] Richard Hofstadter argues that any history of slavery must be written primarily from the slave's perspective.

[10] See Starling for a discussion of how Botkin's monopolization of the WPA narratives affected critics.

[11] In 1968, the historian Stanley Elkins published a second edition of Slavery: A Problem in American

Institutional and Intellectual Life, and Charles H. Nichols depicted slavery from the slave's perspective in Many Thousand Gone: The Ex-Slaves' Account of Their Bondage and Freedom.

[12] Bontemps argues that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s had a direct impact on the study of slave narratives.

[13] Bontemps speaks of the slave narrative as being literature, autobiography, and history.

[14] Sekora notes, "By the early 1830s at the latest, sponsors, printers, and reviewers were writing without dispute of a distinct literary genre. It is clear that readers, from whom there is more direct evidence, were by then calling accounts of slave life as related by present or former slaves 'slave narratives'" (101-02).

[15] Olney contends, "Just as the triangular relationship embracing the sponsor, audience, and ex-slave made of the latter something other than an entirely free creator in the telling of his life story, so also it made of the narrative produced (always keeping the exceptional case in mind) something other than autobiography in any full sense and something other than literature in any reasonable understanding of that term as an act of creative imagination. An autobiography or a piece of imaginative literature may of course observe certain conventions, but it cannot be only, merely conventional without ceasing to be

satisfactory as either autobiography or literature, and that is the case, I should say, with all the slave narratives except the great one by Frederick Douglass" (168).

[16] In this study, "distance" refers to the intervening space (physical, emotional, or psychological) between the slave narrator and another entity (such as his or her enslaved self, audience, or master). "Space" generally refers to the slave narrator's personal and self-imposed boundaries (physical, emotional, or psychological), which do not necessarily have any other specific reference point.

[17] In The Slave Community, Blassingame speaks of the "free" or "maroon" communities in the swamps and mountains in the south. Posing a threat to the planters, these communities tried to recruit slaves from different plantations to join them. They were lawless, fearless, and resourceful bands of runaways who "often engaged in guerrilla-like activities, plundering and burning plantations, stealing stock, and attacking, and robbing, and murdering whites" (209).

[18] See Blassingame's chapter "Plantation Realities" in The Slave Community for discussions of how some masters tried to cripple their slaves emotionally and how some slaves sought approval from their masters.

[19] See Genovese's chapter, "The Men Between," for an in-depth description of the slave masters' methods of selecting drivers for their plantations, the job description

of a driver, and the problems and benefits of being a driver.

[20] Many masters obtained emotional control over their workers by continually telling them that they were unfit for freedom. Another ploy for control was the masters' insistence that their slaves cheerfully perform their tasks and show no signs of discontent. In The Slave Community, see Blassingame's chapter "Plantation Realities."

[21] Genovese asserts that the murdering of masters and overseers cannot simply be explained as a "resistance to slavery" because many of those who committed these acts had been considered "good Negroes," who accepted their condition and work load. "In other words," Genovese writes,

> the plantations contained many slaves who gave little or no indication of rebelliousness and dutifully accepted their subservient roles but who nonetheless did not surrender their will or their honor--who stayed in place so long as their expectations did not suffer a severe jolt and so long as they did not feel betrayed. (617)

[22] See Blassingame's chapter "Culture" in The Slave Community for an explanation of the double nature of some spirituals.

[23] For a discussion of irony in the blues, see Blassingame's "Culture."

[24] See Genovese's chapter "De Big Times" in Roll, Jordon, Roll for commentary on the slaves' use of stories to vent frustrations.

[25] Gilbert Osofsky analyzes the ways in which slaves assumed different roles in the presence of their masters.

[26] Keith Byerman discusses the kinds of deceit necessary for the slaves to achieve any kind of freedom.

[27] See Blassingame's "Culture" in The Slave Community for a discussion of the masters' reactions to their slaves' interest in religious services.

[28] Giving a useful definition of M. M. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, Michael Holquist identifies it as

> the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions--social, historical, meteorological, physiological--that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide;

> as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress. (428)

According to Bakhtin all language is heteroglot in the sense that the meaning of every utterance is affected by a set of conditions in that place and at that moment in time.

[29] See Olney's detailed discussion of the role of authenticating documents in slave narratives.

CHAPTER TWO
Harriet A. Jacobs

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself has long been praised by scholars as the best crafted and most important of all slave accounts. While one would be hard-pressed to deny Douglass's eloquence in expression, one should not dismiss the value of similar narratives for critical study. Undoubtedly there are differences in the readability and quality among slave narratives. Published in 1845, at the inception of the second abolitionist movement, Douglass's narrative established the conventions for numerous slaves, amanuenses, and editors, but such attention has tended to obscure the worth of other slave narratives. Just as significant in its contributions to the genre, Harriet A. Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself (1861) treats the same basic issues that Douglass's autobiography does but additionally addresses the sexual advances some masters made on their female slaves, the frustrations an enslaved parent faced, and the elusiveness of freedom after the Fugitive Slave Law.

Within the past few decades, attention to Jacobs's narrative has increased, but critical response has not always been favorable. John W. Blassingame, for example, argues that "the work is not credible" and that it is "too orderly" and "too melodramatic" (Slave Community 373). Arna Bontemps casts a similarly dubious glance at Incidents,

noting that it "was presented as 'edited' and 'arranged' by the well-known Lydia Maria Child" (xv). In contrast to this negative reception, scholars such as Vernon Loggins, Marion W. Starling, Charles Nichols, Gilbert Osofsky, and Stanley Feldstein affirm the narrative's authenticity. More recent scholarship by Jean Fagan Yellin overturns the dated reservations about the narrative's validity through an examination of Jacobs's newly discovered letters, a correspondence which "establishes Jacobs' authorship and clarifies the role of her editor."[1] While taking Blassingame to task for his feeble or wayward rationale--showing how this man of "eminent scholarship" has accurately judged other slave narratives as authentic despite melodramatic incidents and carefully ordered plots and how he has not taken into account the kinds of fictionalizing an autobiographer may choose to use--William L. Andrews, in To Tell a Free Story, applauds Yellin's analysis and says that it has convincingly laid to rest any reasonable doubts as to the authenticity of Jacobs's account and authorship.

Although this nineteenth-century authenticated slave narrative reads more like melodrama than history, Jacobs wrote not to elicit the pitying tear of sympathy for her own sufferings but to arouse in the minds of Northern female readers "a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage" (1)[2] and an actuating repulsion toward the enslavement of fellow human

beings. This document, which Jacobs had initially hesitated to write herself because of inexperience, provides significant contributions not only to women's literature and the black or abolitionist literary tradition but also to the field of autobiography. In telling the story of slavery, Harriet Jacobs rhetorically plays with the conventions of slave narratives, and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself thus serves as a useful starting point from which to analyze the other narratives in this study.

Rather than simply forming from the various slave accounts a composite picture of the abuses and horrors of slavery, readers can, as William Andrews encourages, view them as examples of free storytelling. The autobiographies of former slaves are not just stories which recount their escape from slavery. They function as declarations of freedom in the sense that the writing process itself is emancipating.[3] What critics have neglected to explore, however, are some key components of that process that make it liberating. A close examination of Incidents and the other texts in this study will show how slave narrators use the tropes of distance and space to negotiate their freedom and their sense of self and how they define the possibilities of freedom for themselves.

The way that slaves orient themselves spatially is one of the most critical factors in the composition of slave narratives. The basis of this connection may in part be

traced to the origins of slavery in America. From the middle of the sixteenth century up until the middle of the nineteenth, numerous European settlers and their descendants bought or stole hundreds of thousands of Africans from their native country. The slave traders not only forcibly effected a physical separation between the Africans and their homelands but also generally severed their contact with family members and friends. In addition to demanding that slaves abandon some of their cultural practices, slave masters commonly renamed their slaves or imposed their own last names on them as property markers, a practice akin to branding. Each of these acts committed by the slave traders or masters effectively wrenched away comfort and familiarity, separated slaves from their cultural foundations, and in forcing Africans into bondage, violated and disrupted the spatial orientations among this group of individuals.

Rhetorical Strategies and Tropes of Distance

This concern with spatial orientations not only appears in the lives of slaves such as Olaudah Equiano and Phyllis Wheatley but also manifests itself in slave narratives in the way that narrators rhetorically separate themselves from their enslaved selves and their oppressors and close the distance between their narrating selves and their audience. In her narrative, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,

Written by Herself, Harriet A. Jacobs steps back from herself by choosing a pseudonym (Linda Brent) and fictitious names for the other central figures in her account. In her Preface, she forthrightly acknowledges this fact and indicates that she took this measure for the sake of the other participants: "I have concealed the names of places, and given persons fictitious names. I had no motive for secrecy on my own account, but I deemed it kind and considerate towards others to pursue this course" (1). Although Jacobs may not have intended to benefit personally from the use of fictitious names, in taking on a pseudonym, she essentially further separates her narrating self from her narrated self. This gap, thus effected between her narrated self and her narrating self, may serve to insulate her psychologically from her oppressor, for in using a pseudonym, she can figuratively deny that she was Dr. Flint's property.

In her narrative, Jacobs also sometimes figuratively escapes from her enslaved self by referring to herself in the third person, thereby creating a "loophole of retreat." The first instance of this occurs in Chapter One, "Childhood." Jacobs so effectively uses third person here in referring to her own state of innocence before being confronted with her status as slave that the statement also applies to slave children in general: "Those were happy days--too happy to last. The slave child had no thought for

the morrow; but there came that blight, which too surely waits on every human being born to be a chattel" (7). In narrating this experience, Jacobs demonstrates a self at least "twice removed" from her self as innocent child in that she has grown up, attained her freedom, and is now writing under a pseudonym. With the air of objectivity that a third-person reference lends, she is able to comment on a condition many slaves experience, thus demonstrating in the earliest stage that her autobiography can expand to reflect a communal slave biography.

Jacobs's employment of a third-person pronoun to describe herself in a specific incident also allows her to justify a response conditioned by slavery. In Chapter Ten, "A Perilous Passage in the Slave Girl's Life," she recounts the time when a white unmarried gentleman, Mr. Sands, began to flatter her with attention and kind words:

> He was an educated and eloquent gentleman; too eloquent, alas, for the poor slave girl who trusted in him. Of course I saw whither all this was tending. I knew the impassable gulf between us; but to be an object of interest to a man who is not married, and who is not her master, is agreeable to the pride and feelings of a slave, if her miserable situation has left her any pride or sentiment. (54-55)

Although in the preceding passage Jacobs provides her readers with details about an admittedly painful and shameful episode in her life, through her strategic use of third person she encourages them to withhold judgment on her actions by carefully directing their attention to see her own plight, to the vulnerability of young slave women in general. Shifting to third person widens this circle of experience and distances the narrator from any self-recrimination she might feel if she thought she responded to the situation in an atypical manner for a poor slave girl.

For Jacobs, the purpose behind using a third-person reference to self is not always to create a transition into a generalization about slaves' attitudes and experiences. In two instances of these pronoun shifts, she draws attention to the power-structure she encountered as a slave. Chapter Six, "The Jealous Mistress," includes a scene in which Jacobs's mistress, Mrs. Flint, accuses her of having an affair with Dr. Flint and demands that she give an account of herself. Jacobs describes how as she told about Dr. Flint's sexual advances toward her, she herself was moved to tears by Mrs. Flint's grief, until she realized it was anger and wounded pride that had awakened her mistress's emotions:

> She felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted; but she had no compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy. She

> pitied herself as a martyr; but she was incapable of feeling for the condition of shame and misery in which her unfortunate, helpless slave was placed. (33)

As she narrates Mrs. Flint's response to her, Jacobs--by speaking of herself in third person--mimics the very attitude her mistress takes toward her.[4] Mrs. Flint displays no compassion for the sufferings of Harriet; except for demanding that she recount Dr. Flint's actions, the mistress has no use for her. While Harriet, deemed mere "chattel," displays sensitivity to Mrs. Flint's grief, her slave mistress demonstrates a lack of sympathy in her refusal to recognize Harriet's humanity.

In reading this scene, one may wonder why Jacobs would choose to refer to herself by other than a first-person pronoun. One explanation for this is that writing from a third-person perspective enables the narrating self to transcend past feelings of helplessness that are momentarily dredged up through the act of remembering; such a perspective can also confirm the figurative distance she has gained on that traumatic experience. Moreover Jacobs can better regulate her readers' response to this moment by lending an air of objectivity through a seemingly unbiased, outsider's view. Pointing out the powerlessness of her own condition, she can place the major emphasis of this scene on

Mrs. Flint's callous disregard of the sexual harassment that she has been subjected to from her master.

Within her slave narrative, Jacobs does not frequently refer to herself with a third-person pronoun, but when she does, it is not done without purpose. She reserves the third-person reference for moments in which she wants to illustrate the power-structure of slavery. In Chapter Twenty-five, "Competition in Cunning," Jacobs describes the contents of a letter she wrote to Dr. Flint while in the garret of her grandmother's house: "I reminded him how he, a gray-headed man, had treated a helpless child, who had been placed in his power, and what years of misery he had brought upon her" (128-29). The use of third person here displaces the focus from herself and centers the readers' attention on Dr. Flint's culpability in her victimization. The pronoun shift may also be seen as an indication that Jacobs has substantially reconfigured the spatial orientation that she once had as a child and that she has now emotionally and psychologically distanced herself from the reach of Dr. Flint's power.

In addition to separating herself from her history, the narrator of Incidents adopts a rhetoric of self-effacement to strengthen her communal voice. When Jacobs describes her Aunt Nancy's plain but well-attended funeral procession, she anticipates how Northern travellers might have interpreted the handkerchief at Mrs. Flint's eyes as a "touching proof

of the attachment between slave holders and their servants" (146). Conscious of how the Northern travellers would only get the story of slavery that the masters narrate for the world, she presents the stories of slavery that the oppressed would narrate. Speaking of her own history, she says, "We could also have told them of a poor, blighted young creature, shut up in a living grave for years, to avoid the tortures that would be inflicted on her, if she ventured to come out and look on the face of her departed friend" (146). By referring to herself, the "poor blighted young creature," in such generic terms, Jacobs calls attention to the suffering of slaves in general and highlights the tyranny of the masters. Jacobs claims that she and the slaves could have given them a chapter of sufferings to touch their hearts "if they *had* any hearts to feel for the colored people" (141). By characterizing as heartless the Northern travelers who misinterpret the relationship between master and slave, she suggests that her own readers are not like this insensitive lot. She implicitly argues that her readers will prove that they have hearts if they acknowledge and act upon the *slaves'* story rather than simply entertain her narrative without experiencing the reality of their afflictions.

Not only do Jacobs and the other slave narrators show a tremendous effort to distance themselves from their enslaved selves, but they also concern themselves with distance in

another way. Throughout their accounts, they demonstrate the desire to draw their audiences closer to them, and they accomplish this task either by making asides to their readers or by using other rhetorical strategies. In the asides to their readers, the slave narrators occasionally give didactic thrusts or respond to what they imagine will be their audiences' reactions at that moment. One of the most prevalent techniques for closing the space between themselves and the readers involves showing that they have mutual interests, demonstrating that they share many of the same attitudes and values, and that many of those slave experiences and responses that the readers might find disagreeable or offensive are conditioned by slavery or necessary for survival.

There can be little wonder that the slave narrators are so adamant in their efforts to bridge the distance between themselves and their readers. If the writers succeed in showing their audiences that they have mutual interests and ideals, then the readers are much more apt to find the slave narrators and their stories credible, and they are also much more likely to have reason to condemn slavery or no longer tolerate it because it hampers or repudiates these mutual ideals. In addition, when the narrators align themselves with their readers, they show that their actions and attitudes which may seem distasteful or sinful to their audiences derive from their condition as slaves, and thus

redirect their readers' condemnation toward the slave holders and the institution of slavery. This rhetorical strategy, in turn, provides validation to the idea that the slaves are not from an inferior race--as the slave holders would argue and many abolitionists would assume--but they have been denied opportunities to succeed and to live more respectable lives. As the writers show that their oppressors have values destructive and antithetical to their own, they conversely show good faith in their readers through the implied belief that they will not treat them with contempt or hostility as their masters have but, instead, will be moved to benevolent action by their hearts of compassion.

Harriet Jacobs begins establishing a relationship with her audience in her Preface as she imagines a speaker and a listener. Although she assumes the name of Linda Brent, this should be understood not as an indication that her narrative is fictitious but rather as a strategy to protect her identity and distance herself from her oppressors. She imagines her reader to be someone intolerant of stories that are melodramatic, thus she immediately tries to reassure her reader that these are actual incidents of history. Without this claim of authenticity, she assumes that the reader would be inclined to think her narrative fictitious. Jacobs's language also imagines the reader as someone not living in close proximity to slavery, and thus being

ignorant of the extent of the brutality committed against slaves. Addressing the uninformed or skeptical reader, she claims, "I have not exaggerated the wrongs inflicted by slavery; on the contrary, my descriptions fall short of the facts" (1). The heavy emphasis on the veracity of this account also presupposes that the reader will be affected differently in knowing that it is not a fictional slave narrative; it also underscores the idea that it is important for the reader to perceive its reality properly.

The projected readers are women of the North who have only heard sketchy accounts of suffering slaves. Jacobs implies that her audience may be ignorant of the abuses specifically committed against black slave women in the South. She desires to make her readers aware of the situation of women still in bondage; she wants them to know that although she writes in the present about what suffering she endured in the past, for millions of other women this suffering continues. Describing a strategy that Jacobs uses to awaken her readers' senses, Thomas Doherty notes that "by cataloging the uniquely female burdens of slavery, the author has provided her virtuous readers with a metaphor for their own sex-determined condition in the nominally free North" (85). Jacobs imagines her readers to be either unable to accept the actuality of slavery or misinformed about it, for she says she wants "to convince the people of the Free States what Slavery really is" (2). The

implication here is that it is not enough that the Northern states refuse to support slavery actively; the people in the North must do more to stop this oppression. Although she indicates her desire to arouse Northern women to a "*realizing* sense" of the condition of black slave women, she later appears to qualify this remark by saying that "only by experience can any one *realize* how deep, and dark, and foul is that pit of abominations" (2; my emphasis). Through these statements she suggests that reading her account is a way of imaginatively experiencing a minute dimension of the affliction of slavery.

Jacobs's Preface works to create a speaker who wants to be seen as absolutely reliable. Knowing that her readers will question the validity of her account, she makes a claim for its veracity and readily acknowledges that, though they may seem unbelievable, her adventures are "strictly true." She wishes to suggest that she is so concerned about being truthful in her description of these incidents that she has held back all but the most basic information. Readily admitting that she is concealing the names of places and using fictitious names, Jacobs offers these decisions as testimony to her honesty, forthrightness, and concern for others. The narrator's language illustrates her self-deprecation on a grand scale, as though it is a virtue to be nourished: "I wish I were more competent to the task I have undertaken. But I trust my readers will excuse deficiencies

in consideration of circumstances" (1). This ironic self-deprecating discourse shares affinities with that Anne Bradstreet used with Puritan patriarchs; it reflects Jacobs's belief that slavery has slighted her opportunities for advancement.

In her Preface, Jacobs seems quite aware of the expectations of her readers. Challenging the nineteenth-century idea that former slaves were lazy and ignorant of how to survive on their own, she shows her readers she is capable of improvement--that what she lacks in skills is due to the "loss of opportunities"--and working toward bettering herself: "Since I have been at the North, it has been necessary for me to work diligently for my own support, and the education of my children" (1). The effect of this language is to establish within the readers the idea that they have values in common with each other and that Jacobs is a concerned and "proper" mother who has perseverance and a work ethic. Her discourse of self-sacrifice further cements the idea of her connection with the ideals of her female readers. Although her language seems directed toward demonstrating that she has an affinity with these readers, it also suggests that she "knows her place," for right after saying that she has tried to improve her mind, she hastens to append a disclaimer: "but I trust my motives will excuse what might otherwise seem presumptuous" (1). Thus the speaker displays an awareness that, while her readers from

the North may believe slavery wrong, some may be offended or take issue with the slightest implication that slaves have a rightful claim to equality.

As Jacobs's Preface locates her in relation to a wider history, she becomes contextualized on several different levels. While she relates some select incidents of affliction within her own life, she speaks as a slave and as a black woman. In declaring, "I want to add my testimony to that of abler pens" (1-2), Jacobs situates her self within a community of sufferers and speakers and also positions her discourse within the general rhetoric of abolition.

The authorial Preface to Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl holds particular significance because it foregrounds the apparatus that accompanies this autobiographical text. In the introductory address, Jacobs establishes a relationship with the reader, and her concern with the reader's understanding of events continues through her entire narration. By frequently making asides and imagining her specific readers, she takes command of her audience's perceptions of her. She deliberately effaces the self, begins to establish a relationship with her readers, and polarizes God and slavery in order to retry her "case" and write her own "free papers."

In the main body of her account, Jacobs also aligns herself and the slaves with her readers by focusing on the values, ideologies, and desires that the white, free females

of the North possess and then argues that she and other slaves also embrace or would strive toward those things but that slave owners obstruct their way. Making an emotional plea to her readers, she describes contrasting pictures of New Year's day:

> O, you happy free women, contrast *your* New Year's day with that of the poor bond-woman! With you it is a pleasant season, and the light of the day is blessed. . . . They [the children] are your own, and no hand but that of death can take them from you.
>
> But to the slave mother New Year's day comes laden with peculiar sorrows. She sits on the cold cabin floor, watching the children who may all be torn from her the next morning . . . . She may be an ignorant creature, degraded by the system that has brutalized her from childhood; but she has a mother's instincts, and is capable of feeling a mother's agonies. (16)

The readers whom she addresses are women of the North, those who understand the importance of secure bonds between a mother and her children. Rather than simply telling the readers about the slave mother's agonies, Jacobs establishes a contrasting picture which reminds her readers of their own values. She here suggests that if the women of the North

support or tolerate slavery, then they are undermining their own ideals of family unity.

Providing another set of divergent pictures, Jacobs describes seeing two beautiful children playing together. One of the sisters was a fair white child, the other her slave. Although Jacobs saw them embracing each other and sharing joyous laughter, she accurately predicted that the fair sister would grow up with flowers and sunshine and that the slave sister would drink "the cup of sin, and shame, and misery" (29). The inclusion of this scenario suggests that the reader will see the disparity between the lives of these two women and attribute to slavery the dark sister's personal degradation. The fact that the white girl and the black girl are sisters, born from the same white father, heightens Jacobs's assertion that she and her white female readers are sisters. Through this example, Jacobs not only portrays the sufferings of one sister, but also locates her self in the context of injustice within a community of women.

Jacobs frequently calls the readers' attention to the idea that slavery fosters a set of values which are antithetical to their own. She also implicitly argues that if there appears to be any part of herself--any value or attitude that would be repugnant or repulsive to her readers' ideologies--the institution of slavery is responsible for it. After she gives birth to her son

Benjamin, Jacobs receives visits from Dr. Flint, who wants her to come back to his house. Aware of her master's wiles, she describes him as using "the old threadbare discourse about his forbearance and my ingratitude" (76). Flint tries to convince her that in having sexual relations with Mr. Sands, she reduced the value of herself. Speaking of her apparent shame, Jacobs says, "I listened with silent contempt when he talked about my having forfeited *his* good opinion; but I shed bitter tears that I was no longer worthy of being respected by the good and pure" (76). While she undoubtedly would have contempt for Flint's hypocritical response, she may be donning an attitude of contrition for the sake of her audience, the "good and pure." Although she recognizes that she chose with "deliberate calculation" to be with Mr. Sands, her subsequent comment reveals another kind of perspective: "Alas! slavery still held me in its poisonous grasp. There was no chance for me to be respectable. There was no prospect of being able to lead a better life" (76). Her suggestion is that, but for slavery, she would be as respectable as her good and pure audience. Jacobs argues that slavery, not a sinful nature, is what "contaminated" her. In framing her liaison with Sands in this way, she affirms her self and regulates her audience's reading of the relationship.

Jacobs similarly provides her readers with guidance for interpreting her demeanor while she and another woman are

being stowed away on a vessel going to the Free States. Although the captain befriends them, Jacobs remains distrustful and ill at ease with him. Describing her own response to the situation, she says, "I was naturally of a confiding disposition, but slavery had made me suspicious of every body" (157). Not wanting to seem full of ingratitude or skepticism or any other negative quality which would connect her self with the Other--her self-serving oppressors rather than her imagined readers--Jacobs attributes her doubts to slavery. In other words, America's "peculiar institution" teaches *unnatural* behavior.

Instead of simply describing incidents within her life, Harriet Jacobs carefully represents each episode in light of how her audience might react to the events themselves. One repeatedly sees in her narrative what Bakhtin calls the "internal dialogization of discourse,"[5] which reflects a concern with her presentation of events and her readers' construction of her identity. At specific points within her account when she senses that readers may feel an antipathy toward her, she erects a protective wall of impunity around the self. She uses this technique most overtly right after she explains that it was necessary that she not let Mrs. Hobbs, the woman with whom her daughter Ellen lived, know that she had just arrived from the South, because it would put several persons who had harbored her in danger. Prefacing her deception, she says,

> I like a straightforward course, and am always reluctant to resort to subterfuges. So far as my ways have been crooked, I charge them all upon slavery. It was that system of violence and wrong which now left me no alternative but to enact a falsehood. (165)

Preserving her self necessitates that Jacobs use this rhetoric of justification. If she had simply described her actions, she would have been implicitly aligning herself with the Other, who freely and proudly makes use of deception for his own gain. In providing this commentary, however, Jacobs reassures her readers of her kinship with truth and, consequently, with them.

Just as strong and prominent as Jacobs's urge to separate her narrating self from her enslaved self and to draw closer to her readers is her compulsion to distance herself from slavery and her oppressors. Certainly slaves in bondage wished no physical contact with their masters, a feeling which does not appear to wane upon manumission or escape. The fact that many former slaves still demonstrate this impulse in their narratives suggests that they have some need or desire within themselves to show their audiences that they are now liberated or no longer subject to the authority of the slave holders. One of the reasons slave narrators might respond to their former masters in this way stems from having been born into slavery and having

lived under someone else's control for so long and hence have become spatially oriented to the bodies of their oppressors: the closer they are to their masters, the greater their feelings of bondage. By keeping their oppressors figuratively at bay, Jacobs and other slave narrators psychologically reassure themselves that they now control their own lives.

Creating a distance between themselves and their oppressors furnishes slave narrators control over both the present and the past. Many areas of life which commonly influence or shape a person's identity and experience were denied slaves and put under the control and dictates of their masters. Through distancing themselves from their oppressors, slave narrators gain a stronger sense of--and control over--who they are as individuals. Reclaiming their identities required that they stand apart from their oppressors. If during their bondage slaves essentially had their histories planned out for them and dictated by their oppressors, slave narrators, through writing their accounts, take possession of their histories and thereby make their masters submissive to them. While at the time of their control, most slave holders were probably quite careful about what aspects of their characters they allowed the rest of the social community to see, the slave narrators can now expose the dark sides of their masters' personalities to public scrutiny and censure. Through the very act of

writing, ex-slaves prevent their former masters from escaping moral responsibility for their participation in the victimization of another race.

For Jacobs, creating this language of difference entails redefining herself in a position relative to her oppressors. She proceeds to this task by aligning herself with God, truth, light, goodness, and justice, thereby establishing a communal relationship with readers with whom she has values in common. Conversely, she associates slave owners and traders with Satan, deception, darkness, evil, and injustice. By implementing this language of difference within her account, Jacobs pulls her readers to her side--making them decide which of these two categories contains the values they want to support or be associated with. Fashioning an oppositional language from slave and anti-abolitionist discourse, she also, on one level, draws attention away from herself and focuses it on the slave owners and traders, capitalizing on their enemy status. While she physically eludes her slave master--hiding out in the crawl space of her grandmother's roof--she also eludes them in the written production of her slave history. In effacing the self, she figuratively puts the self out of reach of the oppressor, thereby becoming untouchable and subverting her own position of subordination.

Showing Dr. Flint in an adversarial position to her self, Jacobs argues he is an epicure and then provides

contrasting pictures to guide the readers' response to her master. She describes his cook as waiting with fear and trembling every time she sent a dinner to his table because if the dish was not to his liking, he whipped her or force fed the "poor, hungry creature" until she choked (12). In another case, Jacobs describes how Flint had ordered a plantation slave to the work house to be tied up to a joist and dangled above the ground. He was to remain in that position until after the doctor had taken his tea, and then he suffered hundreds of successive blows which drew blood and gore (13). By opening her narrative with these examples of cruelty and a description of how, instead of being able to attend her own father's funeral, she was ordered by her mistress to gather flowers to decorate her house for an evening party, Jacobs prepares her readers to see the slave owners as having numbed consciences which did not recognize incongruity or irony in their own actions; they freely indulged in gratifying their own pleasures or aesthetic senses while simultaneously denying the basic needs and humanity of others.

In addition to aligning the reader with herself and other slaves through the affirmation of common values, Jacobs employs oppositional language to describe Dr. Flint and other slavery supporters. Positing her master as the Other, she says his "restless, craving, vicious nature roved about day and night, seeking whom to devour" (18). Other

names she attaches to Dr. Flint or the slave owners include "crafty man," "vile monster," and "fiends who bear the shape of men" (27). In direct contrast to these images of Satan, she pictures herself as "one of God's most powerless creatures" (19), thereby giving an ironic affirmation of the power that protects her.

To showcase the Otherness of her oppressors, Jacobs also occasionally effaces the self by speaking of herself in the third person. An instance of this occurs in her narration of the scene in which Mrs. Flint weeps after hearing that Dr. Flint sexually harassed her, and Jacobs, crying at seeing Mrs. Flint's grief, recognizes that her mistress sheds no tears at all because of her slave's sufferings. As she narrates herself in the third person, Jacobs demonstrates that, unlike the self-absorbed Mrs. Flint, she can get outside of her self and evaluate the situation--that she is no longer the same person whom she writes about; she has psychologically distanced herself from her oppressors. In using a third-person narration, Jacobs draws her readers' attention away from herself and focuses it on the tyranny of her antagonists, emphasizing the fact that this sexual harassment from the master and callousness of the mistress reflect not just her own experience but also that of other women slaves.

For Jacobs as well as other slave narrators, the trope of distance becomes instrumental in attaining and confirming

a measure of freedom. As she effaces the self or speaks of her enslaved self, she can experience a sense of liberty because she has rhetorically fixed her slavery experience in history and, hence, the past. Emphasizing the values and ideologies that she and her readers have in common diminishes the cultural space between them and allows her to validate herself according to societal standards and expectations. By presenting her oppressors as Others, she also emotionally and psychologically insulates herself from her once assigned position of degradation and shows herself as morally superior, thus reversing the power structure of the former master/slave relationship.

Narrative Structure of Romance

In addition to rhetorical strategies, slave narrators also use narrative structure as a way of articulating and measuring the distance achieved from tragic circumstances. Harriet Jacobs, along with many other slave narrators, emplots her narrative as a Romance, as opposed to a Comedy, Satire, or Tragedy. This mode of emplotment[6] should not be confused with American Historical Romance or Romance as Hawthorne describes it but rather in the sense of how Hayden White defines the kind of archetypal story form which some nineteenth-century historians used to give a certain explanation to a set of actual events:

> The Romance is fundamentally a drama of self-identification symbolized by the hero's transcendence of the world of experience, his victory over it, and his final liberation from it . . . . It is a drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness, and of the ultimate transcendence of man over the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall. (8-9)[7]

Jacobs reconstitutes her identity and gives her narrative meaning by treating her history as Romance.[8] Representing her initiation into the world of experience, she tells her readers how she was born a slave but did not realize it until "six years of happy childhood had passed away" (5). The wording is noteworthy because it suggests that her realization of being a slave brought death, not only the death of innocence or naivete but also the death of happiness. She describes the close ties her family members had but how at age six when she experienced the death of her mother, she became aware of her status as a piece of property and her precarious position within the world. These two factors eventually become the impetus for running away from Dr. Flint, her oppressor.

Jacobs has numerous moments of crisis, such as her fending off Dr. Flint's sexual advances and her decision to have two children by Mr. Sands, but the central crisis of

her narrative comes when she finds out that Dr. Flint intends to bring her children to the plantation to be "broke in." She resolves to flee from Dr. Flint in order to procure the freedom of her children, and she represents this as the turning point in her life because she has actively rebelled against the slavery system. Contrary to Carla Kaplan's assertion that her "desperate self-imprisonment" is an ineffective form of combat (102), when Jacobs hides in her grandmother's attic for seven years--her "loophole of retreat"--and then escapes to the North, she transcends the world of experience by refusing to accept her slave status.[9] She later obtains her victory over the world of experience with Mrs. Bruce's help in buying her freedom. Jacobs indicates that she felt grateful to Mrs. Bruce but did not like the idea of having to buy what she already considered her own property. Her sense of victory, however, can be seen in her admission that she did feel as though a heavy load had been lifted from her shoulders (200). While having been redeemed for $300 may give Jacobs both the legal right to control her own body and the confirmation that she is no longer someone's piece of property, she suggests that she is not free until she finishes her story, for she says, "Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage" (201). She is at once indicating that freedom is the last part of her account and, more significantly, that her final liberation from slavery--or at

least that which is possible in this world--comes through writing her narrative, signing her own free papers. By writing her own account, Jacobs psychologically distances herself from the Others, and she provides readers with a sense that through determination and perseverance one can triumph over the evils of slavery.

Gender is one factor which affects Jacobs's narrative emplotment in that, rather than concentrating on the struggle for mastery within her own family as many male slave narrators do, she focuses on the sexual tyranny she experienced with Dr. Flint. Jacobs should not, however, be seen as a traditional woman of the nineteenth century. Beth Maclay Doriani rightly argues that Jacobs subverts the cult of true womanhood and the image of the ideal woman "who was pious, pure, domestic, and submissive" (205). But one should note that as Jacobs subtly does this, she also reassures her female readers that they share similar values.[10] Perhaps the most vivid instance of Jacobs's "gendering" her narrative comes at the end of her account when she says that her story "ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage" (201). She implies that whereas the traditional pinnacle of a woman's life is marriage, as it is also depicted in the popular sentimental fiction of her day,[11] the culmination of *her* life is the psychological freedom that she gains in completing her narrative and

reversing the power relations between herself and her oppressors.

The significance of emplotting a slave narrative as a Romance is that it enables the narrator to overlay specific meaning on described events. Rather than using the mode of Tragedy, in which the fall of the protagonist and the upheaval of the world would take place at the end of the drama and leave the tragic figure resigned to inalterable and eternal conditions (White 9), Harriet Jacobs and other slave narrators use the Romantic mode to communicate a sense of regeneration to their readers and to show how they have overcome the dark force of slavery.[12] Often they will qualify this Romantic mode, however, so that the narratives read more like would-be or modified Romances. Harriet Jacobs, for example, declares that her story ends with freedom, but she indicates that she has not attained all that she has wanted as a "free" woman: "The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble" (201).[13] Although the slave narrators want to be seen as victorious, they suggest that they have not *yet* felt absolute freedom--"final liberation" from the world of experience--because the past inevitably impinges on the present, attested to by their very act of narrating. Part of the triumph of their present status comes from having had the previous status of slave. Jacobs and other slave

narrators in this study want to show themselves as victors and victims, not because they want to elicit pity or sympathy but because they want to indicate what slavery really is and to acknowledge that not all slaves will have the same opportunities, fortitude, and assistance to gain their freedom as they have had. To have hope for their futures and to communicate hope to others, the slave narrators must believe in the Romantic view of history.

Heteroglossia of Authenticating Documents

When Harriet Jacobs and other slave authors in this study describe their experiences in slavery, they offer through their own life stories a communal slave autobiography to the extent that their experiences are representative. Additionally, many of these writers also incorporate other specific cases of slaves' sufferings, which serve to further separate themselves from their former masters by creating the impression that these other slaves are rallying around the testifying narrators. Thus these authors figuratively create a layer of insulation from the influences of their oppressors and can indict slave holders collectively for the sufferings imposed on slaves.

Jacobs's utilization of heteroglossia--a multiplicity of stratifying languages between different socio-ideological groups--suggests that one's identity should be understood in relation to a community; as she writes a biography of the

self, she also writes a biography of the group and a biography of the Other(s). At times quite overt in addressing her readers, Jacobs's discourse projects a speaker and a hearer. M. M. Bakhtin speaks of the interplay between writer and reader as a determining factor in shaping narrative discourse:

> Every discourse presupposes a special conception of the listener, of his apperceptive background and the degree of his responsiveness; it presupposes a specific distance, [and this determines the] methods of internally persuasive discourse during its transmission, as well as methods for framing it in contexts. (Holquist 346)

Tailoring her discourse to white Northerners, Harriet Jacobs explicitly recognizes that this account is only a brief sampling of the story of slavery: "I have not exaggerated the wrongs inflicted by Slavery; on the contrary, my descriptions fall far short of the facts" (1). In making this disclaimer, she voices her concern with maintaining veracity (she wants to appear fully honest with her readers), and she posits her account within the context of a much larger text--the history of racial oppression in America. In addition to attempting to speak for her own race, she also invokes the blessing of a recognized source of authority. Jacobs refers to Bishop (Daniel A.) Payne of Philadelphia[14] in order to show where she got the idea of

publishing her narrative; she also calls upon God to bless her work for the sake of her "persecuted people." Both of these invocations would register positively with her Christian audience and give her narrative a type of divine sanction.

While Jacobs images her readers throughout her narrative in order to motivate them to action, she also deliberately employs heteroglossia to reconstitute her own identity. This heteroglot language emphasizes the idea that within a given situation there are numerous interpretations of the issues and power structures between different socio-ideological groups. Significantly, Jacobs points out in her narrative the fact that while she was in slavery, she was not allowed to have a voice. Although narrative discourse itself is heteroglot, she intentionally uses heteroglossia to make her own voice heard. Writing as if she is trying to appeal a conviction, she specifically presents heteroglossia to her readers which either exposes the arguments of the Other--her oppressor--or functions as evidence that attests to her having been treated unjustly. In light of the fact that she points out that her word as a slave would not hold up in court, she appears to be retrying her case as she writes her narrative, and the result is that she signs her own "free papers."

The heteroglossia which Harriet Jacobs purposely uses includes literary references, authorial speeches, and

inserted genres. The social diversity of speech types in the autobiography dramatizes "the fundamental sociolinguistic reality with and against which all black speech action had to contend for authority" (Andrews, To Tell 272-73). Jacobs, for example, compares herself with Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe when she finds a gimlet in the ceiling of the crawl space she has been hiding in. By referring to Crusoe in this instance, she not only presents her immediate feeling of having found a treasure in an ordinary object but also, more importantly, conveys to the readers her sense of isolation. Toward the end of her narrative when she discusses responses to slave legislation, she presents another literary reference. With grateful remembrance, she describes how she was sheltered by the wife of a senator but notes that "this honorable gentleman would not have voted for the Fugitive Slave Law, as did the senator in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'" (194). By speaking of the characters she refers to as though they are real persons, she shows her awareness of an audience that needs a point of orientation. Although her readers cannot exactly identify with a slave's suffering, she recognizes that for many readers the characters in a novel are real, and that by invoking these literary works, she can arouse the feelings and emotions that her audience had while reading these other works, thus establishing a complex context for reading her slave narrative.

In her chapter entitled "The Old Enemy Again," Jacobs presents the most vividly heteroglot language of her narrative--the letter Miss Emily Flint's brother purportedly wrote to her. Before revealing the letter, she guides her readers, the "jury," to bear in mind that the Flint family believed she had been in the North several years and did not realize that she knew of their attempts to find her. In the letter, young Flint--really Dr. Flint--tries to reassure her that if the family ever had any feelings of resentment toward her, they do not now. His language reflects an internal dialogization: as he anticipates Jacobs's probable hesitation and disbelief, he appears concerned about her welfare and happiness, but the evidence Jacobs presents prior to the letter suggests that he speaks with a false tongue. He attempts to bridge the psychological distance between Jacobs and himself by suggesting that he shares in the slaves' sufferings over her Aunt Nancy's death: "Could you have seen us round her death bed, with her mother, all mingling our tears in one common stream, you would have thought the same heartfelt tie existed between a master and his servant, as between a mother and a child" (172). Although Flint claims to feel the same anguish the slaves feel, he would not have to describe the scene as such if this were true, for Jacobs would already know they are united in sympathies. By presenting this document to her

readers, she is able to refute it publicly and expose Flint's conflicting words and actions.

While the court system had denied Jacobs a voice as a slave, in her narrative she gives her readers the opportunity to hear her side of the case. Jacobs recognizes slavery as a legal contract, and her narrative strategies mimic legal maneuvers. By presenting evidence of the slave holders' tyranny and her own suffering, in addition to showing the faulty reasoning of her oppressors, Jacobs "holds court" herself and creates her own legal documents which serve to vindicate herself and annul her slavery contract.

Levels of Freedom Imagined and Realized

Though the personal backgrounds and sufferings which Harriet Jacobs and other slave writers describe may be vastly different in nature, what they all have in common--on one level or another--is the desire to narrate their movements or struggles toward freedom. While in relation to slavery, the meaning of "freedom" might seem simple and easily identifiable, the concept is much more complex and nebulous in regard to slaves than it is with the rest of the population. On a basic level, of course, the term "freedom" presupposes a kind of autonomy. Perhaps this is why some slave narrators turn to this country's most prominent foundational document, The Declaration of Independence, to

show that the slaves are legally entitled to freedom. The passage they most frequently quote seems to undermine the slave holders' justification of slavery: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . . ." Despite the fact that this document was fashioned to announce that America was no longer going to be in bondage to the dictates of her mother country, it also conveyed the idea that all human beings have been granted certain rights that no one else can deny or take away and that they have the moral sanction to alter or abolish any form of government that becomes destructive to those rights. This "declaration of independence" addresses more than just national sovereignty, for it recognizes the existence and necessity of spheres outside the political domain. In its actual domestic application, however, this treatise did not grant independence to slaves, nor did it acknowledge them as humans.

Observing the irony in the fact that the Declaration of Independence did not compel the emancipation of those in bondage, one may then inquire about when freedom is achieved for any former slave. Clearly, the slaves would experience a kind of freedom if they were manumitted by their masters, but this was not a frequent practice among slave holders, for to them it would be giving away pieces of their

property. Occasionally, slave holders would, as part of their wills, sign free papers for their slaves; and in rare instances, slaves would be allowed to earn money, through being "leased out," to buy their own or their children's freedom. Another option, though extremely dangerous, was for slaves to obtain their freedom by fleeing to one of the free states. For all of these slaves, freedom meant no longer being in physical bondage to their masters. Though many of these measures created a sense of comparative freedom, for the former or fugitive slaves, not one of them guaranteed ultimate safety and a sense of security. Even those freed slaves or their descendants who were living in the South were still subject to slave codes and in danger of being kidnapped or forcibly enslaved again. The slaves who obtained their freedom by finding refuge in the free states and lived many years in an autonomous condition were also forced to rethink the supposed surety of their position and status in the free states when the Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850.

This complication of the concept of "freedom" which the Fugitive Slave Law initiated or more visibly highlighted, creates the central tension in many nineteenth-century American slave narratives. In these accounts, one can discern that the writers do not simply think of freedom in terms of physical distance from their oppressors. Their attainment of freedom, of course, involves being released or

releasing themselves from physical bondage; however, it also entails reaching a state of independence on an emotional and psychological level. Most former slaves probably did not reach freedom on all of these levels simultaneously or in the same ways. Many of the fugitive slaves who fled to the free states were keenly aware of their freedom on the physical level--escaping such things as the sexual advances and physical torments from their masters--but were still plagued by emotional trauma that accompanies enslavement and other abuses.[15] Even if the slaves who reached the North did feel a sense of emotional freedom, with the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law, that could easily be threatened by fear or despair, as many of the slave writers claim.

When in their stories the slave narrators first talk about freedom, they often speak in terms of physical distance, as though it is a geographical location just out of reach or just beyond steep hills. Although the slaves' individual motivations for seeking freedom might have differed slightly in degree and kind, for all of them the state of freedom held the promise of a better life, regardless of what other hardships they suffered. Some slaves may have had even grander expectations of freedom than could be realized, but perhaps this idealization provided them with the necessary impetus to resist oppression and to take steps, however small, to reach a position of physical liberation. As the slave narrators

demonstrate, however, the meaning of freedom is not static; rather, it is an evolving concept for them.

For Harriet Jacobs, as with many other former slaves, the idea and the attainment of freedom seem to become much more complex and elusive as she physically distances herself from her master. The first time she mentions the term "freedom" in her narrative, she describes how a slave holder once told her that he had seen a runaway friend of hers in New York and that this woman was dying of starvation and begged him to take her back to her master, which he refused to do, for this was her punishment for running away from a kind master. Knowing first-hand that the whole story was false, Jacobs expresses concern about the fact that, through lies or exaggerations, some slave holders warp their slaves' conceptions of freedom: "Many of the slaves believe such stories, and think it is not worth while to exchange slavery for such a hard kind of freedom. It is difficult to persuade such that freedom could make them useful men, and enable them to protect their wives and children" (43). By focusing on the concrete details of this woman's story, and then saying that this was "a hard kind of freedom," Jacobs subtly articulates her earliest conception of freedom as a matter of physical liberation from enslavement. Ironically, she here only addresses the idea of freedom on the same level that the slave holders do. Although the masters did not want their slaves to be dwelling on the idea of freedom,

they wanted to give them the impression that "freedom" was not so glorious as they might have heard and that they were much better off staying where they were, where they had food and shelter. As Jacobs demonstrates in her narrative, one of the slave holders' tactics to keep the slaves from attempting to escape was to convince them that they did not have the necessary knowledge or means to survive on their own in the world. The slave holders, of course, neglected to tell the slaves--and maybe did not even fully comprehend themselves--that, just as the slaves can be bound to their oppressors on different levels, freedom may exist on different levels.

When Harriet Jacobs gets her first taste of freedom by escaping from the Flint plantation to the crawlspace of her grandmother's attic, she experiences physical "freedom" in so much as she is no longer subject to Dr. Flint's sexual advances, although this freedom has definite boundaries confined to a cramped space in a garret and to Flint's ignorance of her close presence. At this point she thinks that if she can just reach the North, then she will have freedom. The description of her response to arriving in Philadelphia reveals that she still associates freedom only with a geographical location: "That night I sought my pillow with feelings I had never carried to it before. I verily believed myself to be a free woman" (161). Her narrating self, however, expresses a knowledge that this is

not actually the case. She discovers the disparity between her expectations and reality one week later when she takes a train ride to New York and cannot obtain a first-class ticket because she is "colored." Even in expanding the physical space between herself and her oppressor by taking refuge in a free state, she realizes that she has not yet attained a complete or satisfactory freedom and that her enslavement goes beyond physical subjugation.

Her emotional state remains dominated by anxiety over Dr. Flint's movements and the fear that she will be brought back to the slave states. Jacobs expresses her emotional and psychological enslavement in Chapter Thirteen, "The Meeting of Mother and Daughter," when, realizing Mr. Sands has deceived her about her daughter Ellen's situation, she doubts the security of Benjamin's future: "I returned to my friend's house in an uneasy state of mind. In order to protect my children, it was necessary that I should own myself. I called myself free, and sometimes felt so; but I knew I was insecure" (166). This recognition that freedom entails more than just physical relocation enables her to see that she has been enslaved on different levels, that the feeling of insecurity acts as a kind of bondage prohibiting her from having control over her own life.

If slaves could not find the courage, means, or opportunity to escape, on occasion they tried to procure their freedom by ingratiating themselves with their masters

and earning enough money to buy themselves. Because of the Fugitive Slave Law, some of the slaves who, like Harriet Jacobs, had sought refuge in the North, still did not feel safe and so tried to obtain their free papers. One can see Jacobs's conception of freedom evolving from what it was on Dr. Flint's South Carolina plantation to what it is in New York right after her first visit with Ellen at the Hobbs's house. She now equates freedom with a sense of safety and a legal recognition of one's independent status. With this turn of thinking, she writes to Dr. Flint, asking him to tell her the lowest terms on which he will sell her. Rejecting his advice that she return and submit herself to her "rightful owners," she continues to labor under a "constant feeling of insecurity which oppressed [her] spirits" (168-69) until she seeks out employment as a nanny for Mr. and Mrs. Bruce of Boston. With opportunities for reading and engaging in intelligent conversation, she gradually becomes more cheerful. Even surrounded by the kindness of the Bruce family, however, Jacobs must still sometimes struggle with her sense of bondage, for she claims, "When summer came, the old feeling of insecurity haunted me" (174). This uneasiness does not cease when Emily Flint (now Mrs. Dodge), her legal owner, invites her to live with her or, if unwilling to do so, to purchase herself. While Jacobs believes she needs her free papers to experience complete freedom, the idea of having to get

them greatly disturbs her: "It seemed not only hard, but unjust, to pay for myself. I could not possibly regard myself as a piece of property" (187). For her to write to Emily Flint and accept this "generous" offer would be tantamount to agreeing that she should be regarded as chattel and that she did not already govern her own life.

Though Jacobs cannot bring herself to pay Mrs. Dodge for herself, one of the steps she does take to gain a sense of control over her emotional life is to tell Ellen about her involvement with her and Benjamin's father, Mr. Sands. During the two years she and Ellen have been supporting themselves in Boston, she has wanted to tell her about Mr. Sands, but, as her narrating self acknowledges, she has not been able to "muster sufficient courage" (188). Her reticence and anxiety about broaching the topic make evident her emotional bondage to the kinds of scornful comments Dr. Flint made to her after she gave birth to her son. Being oppressed with the idea that she has lowered herself, she fears that in telling Ellen about this matter, she will forfeit her daughter's love. Sharing this part of her history with Ellen, however, results in a stronger connection between them and in an emotional release of her "pent-up feelings" about her affair.

Despite her visible show of emotional freedom in telling Ellen about Sands, Jacobs reveals that she still feels enslaved to some degree. In Chapter Forty, "The

Fugitive Slave Law," she describes her own and other slaves' feelings of outrage prompted by the passage of this new law: "What a disgrace to a city calling itself free, that inhabitants, guiltless of offence, and seeking to perform their duties conscientiously, should be condemned to live in such incessant fear, and have nowhere to turn for protection!" (191). Her own emotional and psychological bondage to slavery manifests itself in her evening ritual of checking the newspapers' lists of Southerners staying at the hotels for signs of Mr. and Mrs. Dodge, who might arrive to take legal possession of her.

Although Jacobs has struggled for years to attain her freedom and has even written to Dr. Flint to try to buy herself, her idea of freedom has become more complicated. When she tries to evade Mr. and Mrs. Dodge by going to New England, she receives a letter from Mrs. Bruce informing her that she will try to stop this persecution by buying her freedom. Jacobs notes that her reaction to this news is mixed, however:

> I felt grateful for the kindness that prompted this offer, but the idea was not so pleasant to me as might have been expected. The more my mind had become enlightened, the more difficult it was for me to consider myself an article of property; and to pay money to those who had so grievously

> oppressed me seemed like taking from my sufferings the glory of triumph. (199)

Despite Jacobs's polite decline of the offer, Mrs. Bruce writes back and informs her that she has paid Mr. Dodge the money for her freedom. Upon hearing this news, Jacobs experiences shock that she was "sold at last." She gives the reader a description of her reaction to finding out that her kind-hearted employer, Mrs. Bruce, has paid for her bill of sale:

> I well know the value of that bit of paper; but I do not like to look upon it. I am deeply grateful to the generous friend who procured it, but I despise the miscreant who demanded payment for what never rightfully belonged to him or his.
>
> I had objected to having my freedom bought, yet I must confess that when it was done I felt as if a heavy load had been lifted from my weary shoulders. (200)

The freedom that Jacobs refers to here should be seen as her legal corporeal freedom, which makes her no longer physically subject to a master. With this liberation, she also attains release from her emotional bondage. The "heavy load" that has been removed from her weary shoulders refers to her insecurity and incessant fear of being found out as a fugitive and dragged back into slavery. The physical

proximity of the slave holders and traders to her no longer regulates her emotions and sensibilities.

This is not to say that Jacobs now has complete freedom. Of course, she must still abide by slave codes and other laws. While free on the physical and emotional levels, however, she remains psychologically enslaved. Even the law cannot totally free her from some bonds of slavery. Neither can money nor her kind and generous friends release her from the mental oppression of seeing herself chiefly as a victim. Her "case" cannot be won by anyone but herself. The bill of sale that the Dodges and Mrs. Bruce draw up for Jacobs represents only her nominal freedom. In looking back at what she has said to Mrs. Bruce regarding the possible purchase of her, one sees that Jacobs has a desire to secure her own freedom by herself. When she as narrator says, "To pay money to those who had so grievously oppressed me seemed like taking from my sufferings the glory of triumph" (199), one may discern that she, as fugitive, has plans to obtain her triumph through other means than paying for her freedom. Whereas in the past her concept of freedom allowed her to accept help in hiding from Dr. Flint and in fleeing to the North, and even to petition Dr. Flint to establish terms on which she could buy herself, she now seems to sense that complete freedom will not come through anyone but herself. The freedom which she feels after she discovers that her employer has purchased her is not the same kind of freedom

that Jacobs has envisioned for herself. She believes her freedom will be triumphant, but this kind of liberation lacks the power of triumph personally gained.

At the very end of the last chapter, Jacobs describes what might be called a narrative breakthrough: "Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage" (201). In that culminating narrative moment, she seems to transcend not only her account, but also her history--having achieved a psychological freedom at last. In that brief sentence, she speaks volumes. Because she directly addresses her audience here, one should see Jacobs speaking not as a slave but as the narrator. This differentiation holds significance in that it suggests that the freedom she mentions at this moment represents something distinct from the freedom she has experienced because of Mrs. Bruce's efforts. Instead of simply stating when she finishes telling about her slave experiences that she now possesses freedom, Jacobs specifically draws attention to the idea that her story--her narration of events in her life--"ends with," or results in a more extensive freedom. Through the act of narrating her slave experiences, she brings about this liberation. Though Jacobs feels a sense of relief or emotional freedom when Mrs. Bruce secures her physical release from slavery, she cannot find joy in this freedom because "being sold from one owner to another *seem* too much like slavery" (199). After seeing *the* developmen

of Jacobs's idea of freedom, one may be certain that she would not want to finish her narrative with simply a description of the kind of freedom she felt once she was no longer legally a slave. Undoubtedly, Jacobs would strongly object to allowing the law or someone else to determine the value of her life, so the freedom she proudly points out to the reader at the end of the narrative must be more complete than her other experiences of liberation and must have come from her own initiative.

While in the earlier portion of her account Jacobs narrates her enslaved self and reflects on particular incidents, at the end she shows the reader that her current narrating self is significantly different from her narrating self at the outset of her story. Notably, it is her narrating self, not her enslaved/narrated self, that experiences a more profound psychological freedom. This new level of liberation enables Jacobs to rejoice because rather than simply getting out of slavery, she has, to a certain degree, triumphed over it. One needs to recognize, however, that her new psychological freedom has its limitations. In her conclusion, she projects a self that is still restless, still not content with how things are for herself and her children: "We are as free from the power of slave holders as are the white people of the north; and though that, according to my ideas, is not saying a great deal, it is a vast improvement in *my* condition" (201). In conjunction

with this reflection, she speaks of the pain in recalling her years of bondage and leaves the reader with an analogy in the last line of her narrative which conveys the same discontentment: "Yet the retrospection is not altogether without solace; for with those gloomy recollections come tender memories of my good old grandmother, like light, fleecy clouds floating over a dark and troubled sea" (201). Although Jacobs has experienced a psychological freedom in narrating some incidents in her life, these two statements suggest a reservation about considering her experience as unequivocal "freedom." Absolute liberation remains elusive for her because she has not been able to realize her dreams. By qualifying her freedom, she avoids giving her readers a fairy-tale ending, which might lull them into complacency. Instead she tells her readers that even though she has psychologically distanced herself from her oppressor, she, a former slave now in the North, still has to deal with cultural constraints, thus leaving her audience with the sense that it is not only the laws that enslave people but also the prejudicial attitudes that immobilize people; most importantly, one's legal emancipation does not necessarily confer freedom.

To release herself from psychological bondage, Jacobs asserts her own authority to govern her mind and history by composing her own "free papers." In writing her narrative, she affirms her freedom and declares her victory over her

former master. Through recording these incidents in her life, she turns back time and assumes the position of power held by the slave holder by figuratively becoming the "eye" or the master through which everything is filtered and given value. By refusing to allow the law or the slave holders to determine their view of her, Jacobs takes her history--past, present, and future--out of the hands of her former masters and claims possession of her identity as an individual by showing herself to be the ultimate victor over her oppressor. Although Jacobs considers herself "free from the power of slaveholders" (201), she does not appear to have quite the same victory over the institution of slavery because, as she notes in her Preface, she has suffered "the loss of early opportunities to improve" herself (1), which suggests that slavery can keep people enslaved even after they have escaped or been freed.

As Harriet Jacobs and other slave narrators tell the stories of their outward journeys toward a physical freedom, they reveal their inward journeys toward psychological freedom. Perhaps many or most slave writers have not yet reached the latter state when they begin writing their accounts. The impulse to write their narratives may even issue from a need to make their physical freedom real to them on an intellectual level. Their act of writing may be considered a kind of survival technique in the sense that they need to liberate themselves psychologically from their

oppressors and take ownership of their personal histories rather than to allow their former masters to determine how they see and think of themselves and their past.

One of the underlying factors that appears to motivate some slave narrators to write their accounts stems from the feelings of insecurity and helplessness that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 generated. For those slaves who had escaped to the free states and had felt safe from their masters, this law essentially obliterated the significance of any physical distance they had put between themselves and the slave holders. The fugitives were then almost as much in jeopardy and at the mercy of their masters as they would have been in a slave state. Through telling their life stories, the slave narrators can "talk back" to the Fugitive Slave Law and all other laws to which slaves have been subjected, and they can show their former masters and their readers that the law is not what truly determines their status or their worth as human beings.

NOTES

[1] See Jean Fagan Yellin's "Texts" and "Written" for a background history of Jacobs's narrative. In the latter article, Yellin reveals her discovery of Jacobs's letters and shows how they help to establish the narrative's historical authenticity.

[2] All references to Harriet A. Jacobs's narrative are to Harvard's 1987 edition (a reprint of the 1861 edition) and will be cited parenthetically.

[3] For a discussion of writing's emancipatory nature, see Andrews's To Tell a Free Story.

[4] See Hortense J. Spillers for a discussion of how Mrs. Flint functions as a "preambulatory nightmare" to Harriet Jacobs.

[5] Defining this concept, Bakhtin says,

> Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood as a part of a greater whole--there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative

> to any of its current inhabitants, insures that there can be no actual monologue. . . . A word, discourse, language or culture undergoes 'dialogization' when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative or absolute. (Holquist 426-27)

This internal dialogization of discourse manifests itself in Jacobs's narrative when her language reflects (i.e., is conditioned by) an anticipation of how her audience might respond to the situation being narrated.

[6] Defining this implicit narrating strategy, Hayden White says, "Emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind" (7).

[7] See also Andrews's "Representation" which focuses on the metaphorical shifts between Frederick Douglass's Narrative and Booker T. Washington's Up from Slavery. Andrews contends that the slave narrative's classic form was established during the time of the Romantic movement in American literature, and although he never specifically speaks of Romance as a mode of emplotment as White does, he articulates a similar basic structure of the antebellum slave narrative: "The slave's outward struggle for physical freedom emanates from an inner conflict played out in the arena of his consciousness," and through the act of

rebellion, "the slave realizes himself, gives order to the chaos of his condition, and claims what we might call an existential authenticity and freedom while still in bondage." Then he flees to the North, seeking "an ideal of freedom, a condition in which one may liberate the essential self within through expressive action and the power of the word" (65).

[8] In discussing the development of slave narratives, Frances Smith Foster, in Witnessing Slavery, argues that nineteenth-century accounts held popular appeal because of the timeliness of the subject matter, the excitement, and the "potential romanticism." Her outline of the structure of these narratives, however, is much more generalized and sweeping than White's:

> The protagonists of these stories were exotic but noble Christians who endured great misfortunes, effected dangerously desperate escapes, and then, perhaps most important, did not seek revenge but instead forgave their oppressors. These stories included all the ingredients of the then popular novels but were even better because they were true. (54)

Foster's description, however enraptured she is with it, comes closer to defining Hawthorne's Romance than specifying a mode of emplotment.

[9] In her Introduction, Valerie Smith notes that although the grandmother's attic may seem like a kind of prison, for Jacobs it serves as the means through which she becomes "spiritually independent" from Dr. Flint and facilitates her physical freedom.

[10] Laura E. Tanner wisely reads Jacobs's affair with Mr. Sands as an effort to "assert the dignity of her own worth in the face of a system that inherently denies such worth but also a successful and intelligent manipulation of her narrowly defined situation that demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the economics of slavery" (415-16). As she further discusses the Sands episode, however, Tanner makes unfounded and illogical assumptions about Jacobs's narration of it:

> Linda Brent's judgment of herself, whether viewed as a sign of the influence of a narrow white Christian morality or as a concession to maintaining propriety in order not to offend her audience and jeopardize her cause, is equally injurious, for it calls into question the basic premise of the slave's right to freedom--the notion that the black man or woman is a human being with all of the rights and privileges that status affords. (418)

Tanner falsely assumes that Jacobs's feeling and/or expression of sorrow and shame necessarily result from the

"influence of a narrow white Christian morality" which undercuts or damages the slave's claim to freedom. What Tanner fails to recognize is that a person of "status" might also "judge" herself or practice self-censure as Jacobs has done. She needs to allow for the possibility that Jacobs had originally decided upon a personal integrity that would exclude this kind of sexual relationship outside of marriage. Certainly, one can see Jacobs anticipating how her white Christian audience is likely to react to the affair, but one should also realize that Jacobs's point in sharing this episode is to emphasize the desperate nature of the slave woman's situation and to show how the slave system has stripped slave women of the choices and freedoms that white and free women have available to them. These issues give more weight to the idea that slave women should not be held to the same moral standards or expectations as free women.

[11] Doriani argues that Harriet Jacobs develops her identity through "subversive interplay with readers' expectations" as she plays with the structure of popular females genres--the seduction novel and the domestic novel--and an Afro-American genre (200).

[12] Martha K. Cobb speaks of this same kind of pattern in slave narratives but attributes it to voice rather than to a kind of emplotment. She asserts that slave narrators try to transform their experiences into some sense of

meaning that will confirm the humanity of the slave. They do this by reversing the concept of slave as victim and show the slave becoming a hero-protagonist "who not only declares the evils of the system that holds him prisoner, but challenges the values of a system that he knows may ultimately destroy him" (36-37).

[13] Bruce Mills suggests that the last sentence of Incidents directs eyes heavenward, for though Jacobs acknowledges that recalling the past has been painful, she says she has found some relief--that the memories of her grandmother are "like light, fleecy clouds floating over a dark and troubled sea" (201). Mill convincingly argues that this vision enables Jacobs to transcend her sufferings.

[14] Bishop Daniel Payne taught and preached throughout the country and later became president of Wilberforce University.

[15] See Blassingame's chapter "Slave Personality Types" in The Slave Community for a description of how some former slaves, such as Nancy Howard of Maryland, have reported that they cannot forget the physical torments and mental anguish they suffered while enslaved, and still suffer in their dreams of being pursued.

CHAPTER THREE
William Craft

Certainly one of the most powerful weapons in the abolitionist literary arsenal is a slave narrative written by one of the victims of America's "peculiar institution." Although numerous slave accounts have been published, one can reasonably imagine that there were "unspeakable" horrors never recorded because many or most of the slaves were forbidden by law to read or write. When the former or fugitive slaves *do* speak, they tell stories not only of their own lives but also of millions of other lives. Autobiographical slave narratives deserve a separate consideration from fictional slave accounts such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin or the Narrative of James Williams[1] because in addition to providing what the reader is asked to regard as factual details about the events and abuses in the slaves' lives, they also manifest the slaves' perceptions of their own lives and reveal that some of the narrators use the tropes of distance and space to gain a sense of freedom and reclaim their identities.

Rivaling Harriet Jacobs's account in its dramatic appeal, William Craft's Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; Or, The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery (1860) is another slave narrative which illustrates how the concept of freedom becomes more complicated during the antebellum and post-Fugitive Slave Law years. Both of these accounts, however, would not be so complex and

revealing of the self if the authors had left their stories up to other people to tell.[2] Just as it appeared that someone other than Jacobs was going to write her story, the narrative of William and Ellen Craft also seemed to be fated for a second-hand account, for as Arna Bontemps notes, their story "had been told, repeated in fragments, and retold among proslavery people as well as by Abolitionists for at least a decade before the Crafts were in a position to publish their narrative" (Bontemps 269). Although both Jacobs and Craft ostensibly write their own accounts in order to bolster the abolitionist movement and ensure an adherence to the truth in the details of their lives by taking their personal stories out of the hands of someone else, they also take their own histories out of the hands of their masters.[3] In writing their own narratives, Jacobs and Craft are, in effect, able to refute their once assigned position of subordination. They achieve mastery over their own histories and figuratively force their former oppressors into submission.

Rhetorical Strategies and Tropes of Distance

In Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom, William Craft, like Harriet Jacobs, refutes his slave status and attains a measure of freedom through rhetorically manipulating the distances between himself and his enslaved self, his readers, and his former master. In his Preface, Craft

begins to separate himself from his subordinate position through a projected stance. Imaging himself as simple and innocent, he appropriates two ideas to show how he and his wife Ellen decided on their course of action:

> Having heard while in Slavery that 'God made of one blood all nations of men,' and also that the American Declaration of Independence says, that 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;' we could not understand by what right we were held as 'chattels.'(iii)[4]

By choosing these passages from the Declaration of Independence to quote to his readers, Craft suggests that he is aligned with God and with right living according to the precepts of the forefathers. When he indicates that he heard these two things while in slavery, he is saying, in essence, that he and Ellen are not the ones that came up with this kind of thinking. He emphasizes the idea that it was other men, this nation's founding fathers, who wrote these words and by their very wording have indicated that God is omnipotent and rules over them. Strategically using their wording and concepts, he subtly declares that in running away he is really following not only God but also what these men have declared as truth. While maintaining

the look of wide-eyed innocence but employing piercing logic, Craft takes their line of thinking and uses it to call into question the general practice of slavery and his own enslavement. He does this in such a benign way that he does not alienate the reader. Although he refuses to accept blame for running away from his legal master, he retains his image of being respectful of authority by implying that he is just following what he has heard from the government, obtaining "those rights which are so vividly set forth in the Declaration" (iii).

This passage of the Preface also images the speaker as embracing truth and seeking justice. Craft's language shows him feigning a subordinate position: he indicates that it is *after* hearing the words of the Declaration while a slave that he and his wife "could not understand by what right we were held as 'chattels'" (iii). He suggests that as a direct result of hearing this new information they felt justified in fleeing slavery. In other words, it is the moral ideal of the government of the slave owner and trader, supposedly not something within himself, that made him question his position and status. The implicit questions he poses to the reader are, "Shouldn't we accept the Declaration of Independence as morally valid? and "Who am *I* to question or contradict the founding fathers?"

Craft distances himself from his slavery status not only by using the words of well-respected leaders but also

by choosing passages which refer to God. As he vindicates his running a thousand miles for legal freedom, he also justifies himself morally with these same excerpts. He indirectly places more emphasis on his own goodness and uprightness when he says that he hopes that the account of their escape and other matter which he includes with it can be the "means of creating in some minds a deeper abhorrence of the sinful and abominable practice of enslaving and brutifying our fellow-creatures" (iv). In labeling the practice of slavery as "sinful," he conveys to his readers the idea that he has greater spiritual discernment than the slave holders and that he speaks from a higher moral plane. Similarly, when he voices his hope that his readers will develop a deeper abhorrence of this "abominable practice," he, in effect, implores them to distance themselves or shrink from slavery as he has, not just passively put up with it but rather speak out or act against it. Craft makes a few significant points here. In addition to castigating the slave holders for their sin of enslaving people, he also argues that they are "brutifying" people. Earlier in his Preface, he indicated that he and his wife were held as "chattels." These two assertions are part of the same argument. While slave holders considered the African-Americans a sub-human lot, akin to animals, Craft here declares that it is the slave holders who stifle their spirits and make some of them into brutes by denying and

trampling on their humanity. As Craft articulates the evil which slavery perpetuates, he creates for himself a space to speak. Although some of his readers who do not own slaves may have found fault with his running away from his master, Craft, in pointing out that slavery is a sinful practice, shields himself from censure from his audience, morally separates himself from his former master, and also stands back from his period of enslavement. More specifically addressing relationships, he points out that those who are being enslaved and brutified are "our fellow-creatures." This is a noteworthy designation because through it Craft identifies himself not just with the victims but with his readers too, and he rhetorically links his readers with the slaves. Certainly he could have just as easily said "other creatures" instead, but "our fellow-creatures" emphasizes the connection and bond of humanity among the three groups, and it figuratively obfuscates social standing.

Within the next and last paragraph of the Preface, however, Craft resumes his attitude of meekness: "Without stopping to write a long apology for offering this little volume to the public, I shall commence at once to pursue my simple story" (iv). Through this sentence, he makes a couple of important moves. He displays a knowledge of one of the slave narrative conventions--making an apology for his lack of verbal eloquence--and informs the reader that he knows what is expected of him. He so carefully creates a

rhetorical space for himself that at the same time he seems to defer to his audience, he also reveals that he is not going to play the game by these rules. In identifying his account as "this little volume" and "my simple story," he projects an image of humility without actually humbling himself by listing his deficiencies, and for the reader these descriptions suggest a speaker motivated not by self-aggrandizement but by a sense of injustice. Craft implies that it is his own sense of urgency for exposing this atrocious institution which prevents him from making a long apology. Saying that he is not going to stop to make a "long apology" gives the impression, on one level, that he thinks he needs to, but he really does not stop to make *any* apology. Thus, the adjective "long" functions to appease his audience and to distance himself from a position of inferiority.

In light of the posture Craft makes in his Preface, his decision to close the introduction with his name and his return address of London takes on greater significance. Both of these elements emphasize the idea that he has put some distance between his narrating self and his enslaved self. His ability not just to write but to have his autobiographical account published attests to the fact that he is no longer subject to the laws which make it illegal for a slave to learn how to read and write. His return address of London highlights this linguistic space and

verifies his physical removal from slavery. It also speaks of his sense of injustice and lends dramatic poignancy to his account because it echoes Craft's quoted epigraph from Cowper on the title page of his narrative: "'Slaves cannot breathe in England: if their lungs/Receive our air, that moment they are free;/They touch our country and their shackles fall.'" Craft, then, in using this epigraph and signing "London," highlights the irony of the American slave's situation. Although a return address on a preface may seem like extraneous information, in this case it is significant because it vividly contextualizes Craft's discourse and ironically confirms him as a displaced person who has had to flee to England in order to procure those rights outlined in the American Declaration of Independence.

In the body of his narrative, Craft also takes steps to distance himself from his enslaved self. The strategies he employs for this area differ in number and kind from what Harriet Jacobs uses in her account. Rather than referring to himself with third person pronouns, Craft incorporates several digressions into his narrative which serve a similar function.

Instead of narrating his escape from the planning stages straight through to its execution, Craft interrupts or puts aside the story of himself and his wife to give his readers the stories of other slaves, excerpts from government documents, and other tangential yet pertinent

information. By digressing from his story, Craft emphasizes the fact that this narrative is not his story alone, and he draws attention to the Otherness of the slaves' owners and traders.

The first digression, lasting for about four pages, concerns a German emigrant who took a job on a plantation in New Orleans and brought along his two young girls. When he died suddenly from a fever, his girls were secretly sold into slavery by the plantation owner who had a reputation for honor and honesty, and one was not discovered and freed by a court of law until 25 years later. By relating this account, Craft argues that slavery separates families, that slave traders abide by no rules--not even slavery laws--and that the institution of slavery encompasses whites as well as blacks. The implication in this case is that no one is safe from the ravages of slavery as long as it is legal. This story, which Craft follows up with a similar but briefer example, enables him to describe another reality than what he has personally experienced. By interrupting his own story and including a digressive account which does not involve him at all, Craft draws attention to the idea that the traders and the slave holders unhesitatingly take advantage of the weak. Because he is an outsider to this experience, his narration appears more objective. Craft can, as Jacobs does when she employs a third person pronoun to narrate her own experience, direct the readers' attention

to the subject matter and issue, rather than to himself. In effacing the self by way of interrupting his narrative, Craft displays his ability to put his own history aside, thereby reflecting his freedom to narrate his own life and articulating the psychological distance he has put between the self and the Other. His digressions also accentuate a communal voice. He locates his story among numerous other slave stories to dramatize the fact that as he talks about his own sufferings, he also talks about the afflictions of countless other slaves.

Craft distances himself through a much lengthier digression later in his account. This interpolated story involves a "very humane" and rich gentleman who bought a slave woman and had her live with him as his wife. They had a family of nearly-white, well-educated, and beautiful girls. When the father was suddenly killed and the family discovered he had left no will, they felt their liberty was secure. A "villain," hearing of their circumstances, swore he was a relative of their father and won the rights to all of their property and auctioned off the family, selling the youngest, a girl of Christ-like piety, dignity of manner, great talent, and beauty, to an uneducated and drunken slave dealer, who took her for his own personal uses. Through the use of this diversion, Craft steps back from his own story of enslavement and gives his readers a wider sampling of the barbarous acts sanctioned by slavery. If he had spent the

entirety of his narrative talking about the abuses he suffered, his account would have read like a "woe is me" sob story. Even if he did do that, he could not present as complete a picture as he has provided here. The digressions enable him to separate himself from his enslavement because they, with his own personal story too, form a communal voice to tell *the* story of slavery, reflecting the divergent experiences of many more slaves and showing the pervasiveness of its persecutions. With these specific digressions, Craft brings slavery closer to his readers' front doorsteps. He uses the first scenario to show that African-Americans are not the only ones being enslaved, and the second to illustrate that for the few men who are true to their pledges, their "property" is still liable to be confiscated and sold for debts. In both accounts, Craft anticipates and overturns the kinds of assumptions his readers may have about slavery--that they and their relatives are safe from slavery and that there are some kind masters who "do right" by their concubines. By using this communal voice, he insulates himself from his own slave experience and holds all slave masters responsible for such egregious acts.

Along with digression, Craft makes use of disguise to separate himself from his enslavement. Whereas he and his wife Ellen don costumes--she dresses up as a male, invalid slave owner and he as her slave--to gain physical distance

from their master, he also wears a verbal disguise in his narration of their escape to effect an emotional distance from slavery. As he begins to narrate their journey, he announces his plan in an aside to the readers: "I . . . got into the negro car in which I knew I should have to ride; but my *master* (as I will now call my wife) took a longer way round, and only arrived there with the bulk of the passengers. He obtained a ticket for himself and one for his slave . . . " (42). From the description of their boarding the train in Georgia until the description of their leaving the train station after arriving in Philadelphia (about 38 pages), Craft refers to his wife as "master" and verbally changes her gender to "he" to mimic the physical disguise she wears. William Andrews suggests that in calling his wife "master," Craft "actually savors the convincingness of her charade while also suspending, during his narration of the liminal phase of their lives, the equation of mastery and maleness on which societal power in the North and South had been traditionally predicated" (To Tell 213). Certainly, Craft may be relishing the fact that they have outwitted their master and may be questioning the gendering of power, but he may be up to something else too. He and Ellen have not only removed themselves from their master's plantation but also created multiple layers of costumes that further separate them from slavery. In taking on different gender and social roles, they provide

themselves with a greater amount of emotional insulation. The fact that they are using physical disguises and that Craft makes use of them verbally suggests that they do not simply provide an external transformation, but instead yield a sense of freedom. As he refers to his wife as his master, Craft rhetorically reconfigures his slave orientation and again undermines the power of his former owner by refuting his position of ascendancy even in Craft's history.

Craft exhibits a similar verbal playfulness in utilizing humor to separate his narrating self from his enslaved self. One instance of this occurs as he describes how he, like his wife, obtained a pass from the man to whom his master had apprenticed him:

> The cabinet-maker with whom I worked gave me a similar paper, but said that he needed my services very much, and wished me to return as soon as the time granted was up. I thanked him kindly; but somehow I have not been able to make it convenient to return yet; and, as the free air of good old England agrees so well with my wife and our dear little ones, as well as with myself, it is not at all likely we shall return at present to the 'peculiar institution' of chains and stripes. (31-32)

Craft's demeanor here amuses the readers because it appears so incongruous with the somber subject matter. At a time

when one would expect his narrative to be quite serious, Craft projects a somewhat cavalier attitude. Through the use of humor, he takes this tension-filled moment--the point at which he as a slave is in the most servile position because he so desperately wants that pass--and transforms it into a rhetorical showdown. Reversing slavery's traditional power relationship with humor, Craft becomes the verbal master and makes the cabinet-maker the butt of his joke.

In a few places in his account, Craft brandishes his wit not in the face of his owner or employer but in encounters with Southerners. On one such occasion, he tells of his response to an elderly gentleman who questions him about his "master," who has poultices wrapped around his head:

> I told him where he came from, and said he was suffering from a complication of complaints, and was going to Philadelphia, where he thought he could get more suitable advice than in Georgia.
>
> The gentleman said my master could obtain the very best advice in Philadelphia. Which turned out to be quite correct, though he did not receive it from physicians, but from kind abolitionists, who understood his case much better. (58-59)

This light-hearted description is more than just humor for humor's sake; it is functional. Although in this situation Craft does not respond to his master but rather a friendly

old man, the scene may still be read as a confrontation. Almost every encounter a slave or free African-American had with a white person was potentially a challenge, for as Craft notes, even "the lowest villain in the country, should he be a white man, has the legal power to arrest, and question, in the most inquisitorial and insulting manner, any colored person, male or female, that he may find at large . . . " (36). While the old man in this scene is not physically menacing, he, nevertheless, represents a threat, a visible reminder of the power structure that slavery supports. Craft is at this man's mercy, with the possibility of his being displeased with or doubting Craft's responses and exposing their charade. In the narration of this encounter, however, Craft figuratively subjugates him with humor, thus distancing himself from a feeling of impotence that his slave status has fostered.

Like Harriet Jacobs, Craft not only adjusts his spatial orientation in regard to his enslaved self but also tries to close the emotional and psychological gap between him and his readers. His Preface imagines its listeners as reasonable individuals capable of following the logical deductions he makes in coming to his conclusion that he and his wife (and everyone else) were not obliged to accept their chattel status. Because Craft says in publishing this account he wants to create in some minds a "deeper abhorrence" for the slave trade, one may deduce that his

listener already disapproves of slavery. Perhaps Craft's discourse may be read as an attempt to rally a stronger, more vocal and demonstrative opposition to slavery. Besides being capable of feeling an abhorrence of this practice of degradation, the projected readers have the potential for stopping this tyranny, and yet there is also a subtle indication that the readers do not yet feel a deep enough loathing of slavery. The words Craft uses to describe the slaves and the slave trade also establish a kinship among the slaves, speaker, and reader. The implication is that the readers accept the Declaration as valid and so at least tacitly agree with the assertion that "all men are created equal." While the slave owners and traders consider their slaves "chattels" and animals, Craft aligns the slave with the readers by arguing that they are men (and women) who share a common blood with one another.

Although in his Preface he points to this bond of humanity that he, his readers, and the slaves share, generally Craft differs from Jacobs in his approach to addressing his audience, being less direct and more implicit. In the body of his narrative, he pulls himself closer to his readers by showing them that he has similar concerns and values. One of the subjects that Craft repeatedly discusses is the family and how slavery affects it. His first example appears near the beginning of the narrative as he explains what was even more distressing and

unbearable than the fact that because of slavery he and his wife could not call their physical bodies their own: ". . . the fact that another man had the power to tear from our cradle the new-born babe and sell it in the shambles like a brute, and then scourge us if we dared to lift a finger to save it from such a fate, haunted us for years" (1-2). The effectiveness of this description stems in part from Craft's decision not simply to quote a law or mechanically say that their master sold their baby. He forces his readers to visualize with him this heinous scenario, making them realize on more than just an intellectual level the injustice of such acts. Although a close examination of Craft's wording reveals an ambiguity that leaves open the possibility that this ordeal may not have actually happened, the point made is bad enough--the slave holder *may* act with impunity. Craft shows his audience that, like them and unlike the stereotypes about African-Americans, he considers the family a sacred unit which should remain inviolable from outsiders. He further presses this point with a potentially more poignant emotional appeal. Reminding his readers that slavery is not confined to any specific complexion, he notes that he has personally talked with several slaves who have told him that their parents were white and free and that they were stolen from them at a young age. He brings out the hopelessness of these cases by emphasizing the fact that a slave's testimony is not admitted in court against a free

white person, so a white child who has been kidnapped and sold into slavery will likely never regain freedom. Through these two examples, Craft suggests to his readers that they have a common interest which crosses color lines: the preservation of the family.

As Craft tries to align himself with his audience through a union of sympathies, he also highlights the idea that slavery encourages behaviors which directly oppose the values he and his readers strive to cultivate. Although Craft can assume his readers to be repulsed by slavery, he addresses them as if they are not totally cognizant of a specific kind of abuse within the system. He describes how it is a common practice for "ladies" in Southern states to send their female slaves to the sugar-house or some other designated place for punishment to have them flogged, but the "villains" who oversee the slave women do more than flog them; they subject them to "the greatest indignity." Because of the proprieties of nineteenth-century publishers and the presumably delicate sensibilities of his audience, he avoids specifying what these villains do, yet Craft clearly expresses his rage at the sexual assault of slave women and appeals to his readers' sense of morality:

> Oh! if there is any one thing under the wide canopy of heaven horrible enough to stir a man's soul, and to make his very blood boil, it is the thought of his dear wife, his unprotected sister,

> or his young and virtuous daughters, struggling to save themselves from falling a prey to such demons! (8)

Through such statements, Craft causes his male readers to experience vicariously the personal degradation to which these slave women and their male relations have to submit. He subtly suggests that if this scene does not move them to action, then they must be as unfeeling and degenerate as the slave owners. Not only telling his readers a story of abuse and making them a part of it through imaginative participation, Craft establishes his central point that numerous enslaved women suffer sexual violations and that while they may, as Craft's audience, aspire to keep themselves sexually pure in mind and body, those values are being trampled upon.[5] Slavery teaches women in bondage that because generally they have no ultimate control over their bodies, those values are meaningless. Craft's narrative suggests that just as the laws of slavery tell these women that they are defenseless, these same laws provide slave holders and overseers with a form of omnipotence.[6]

This emphasis represents a different reading from Jacobs's narrative, in which she acknowledges that enslaved women are frequently subject to sexual abuse and that Dr. Flint could have forced her to submit to him sexually--as he himself reminded her--but shows her readers that she managed to exert some control over her own body by having an affair

(and baby) with Mr. Sands. As a male narrator, Craft cannot speak to this issue in the same way that Jacobs does. Granted, he runs the risk of stereotyping slave women when he says they as a group are defenseless, but certainly he cannot say that they just need to put up a stronger fight against their attackers without coming across as callous and short-sighted. Similarly, he cannot advocate their engaging in illicit affairs as Jacobs did without shocking and repulsing his audience. By saying that slave women simply need to trust God for their deliverance Craft may, on one level, appeal to his readers' faith, but such a message is not a suitable option because slave women who are sexually assaulted would be exposed to possible censure for not having enough trust in God (victimizing the victim), and it would take away the burden of responsibility from the very people who have it within their power to stop not only sexual abuse but also slavery--Craft's audience. Calling his readers to action necessitates that he represent the slave women as defenseless.

Through this lamentation, Craft also makes statements to or about three separate groups of men. The visible group of men he describes consists of those slave holders or overseers who sexually assault female slaves. In calling them "demons," he wants his readers to see that they stalk the innocent and that slavery feeds their savage propensities and carnal lusts. He presents their acts

committed for sexual satiation as the most heinous and unconscionable. In sharp contrast to these men are those in Craft's second group, the enslaved men. Part of the frustration of their position results from the white Southern slave holder's indulgent sexual appetites. Offering a perspective which Jacobs cannot give her readers, Craft suggests that the action of the first group victimizes not just women but men as well because slavery denies them the traditionally masculine role of protector. Although he notes that, at least under the control of her new mistress, his wife was fortunate enough to be spared from the worst features of slavery, he can relate to the males in his audience much better than Jacobs could because he personally understands the masculine desire to defend one's family and the enslaved man's feeling of powerlessness against the tyranny, sexual and otherwise, which some slave holders practice on female relatives. As he empathizes with enslaved men, he rhetorically confirms his own distance from that feeling of helplessness and identifies with the freedom that his male readers have to protect their own families. Rather than simply giving a description of this common practice of sending women to the sugar-house, which, along with victimized females, directly or indirectly involves demonized slave holders and enslaved men, Craft also challenges a third group of men, his male readers. By specifically identifying the various women who could fall

prey to the "demons," he forces them to think about their own female relations suffering this same fate. The implication is that if this thought does not stir their blood and enrage them, no atrocity will. One should read his lamentation as an indication that he believes his male readers have not considered this loathsome feature seriously enough. Subtly chastising them, he implies that they need to develop a greater antipathy toward this practice, enough to propel them to oppose slavery actively. His approach is so diplomatic, however, that rather than alienating his male readers, his stirring comment shows good faith in them and a common interest, the welfare of the family.

As Craft shows his audience that slavery opposes values they have in common, he offers an appeal aimed at more than just his male audience. While he tries to foster a relationship with his readers, he displays integrity by not mincing words as he speaks of his convictions. Refusing to compromise his values to patronize his audience, he not only blames the slaveholding men and women but also specifically addresses his female readers as having the potential to stop slavery--the implication being that although they do not actively support it, by their behavior they may be extenuating or excusing the problem. He does not overtly condemn but rather indirectly prompts them to examine how they have responded to this abuse:

> It always appears strange to me that any one who was not born a slaveholder, and steeped to the very core in the demoralizing atmosphere of the Southern States, can in any way palliate slavery. It is still more surprising to see virtuous ladies looking with patience upon, and remaining indifferent to, the existence of a system that exposes nearly two millions of their own sex in the manner I have mentioned, and that too in a professedly free and Christian country. (8)

Craft's comment here should be taken as more than simply the expression of a feeling, as he makes it sound. The passage amounts to a rhetorical maneuver. He suggests that it is the slave holders who, predictably, will try to excuse slavery. For Craft, it is not enough that his readers do not own slaves and are not theoretically in favor of slavery. His point is that if in *practice* they do not oppose slavery, then they might as well theoretically support it. He knows his audience will not want to be associated with slave holders and those who are considered demoralized and will want to show that they are different by separating themselves from them and slavery.

In his statement directed toward his female readers, he essentially polarizes "virtuous" and "indifferent," thus implying that those women who are virtuous will not be indifferent to slavery and, conversely, that if they are not

moved by the suffering of enslaved women, then they are probably not virtuous. Knowing fully well that his female readers will not want their virtue in question, Craft challenges them to prove their character by supporting abolition. He also appeals to them to think of slave women as their sisters, implying that if they passively allow black women to be abused, then they give permission for slave owners to abuse their own sex. At the close of his "address" he further suggests that when virtuous women remain indifferent to slavery, they confute the claim that America is a free and Christian country. Although Craft may be saying some things which are potentially quite disturbing to his readers, he does it in such a non-threatening, unassuming manner that he makes it palatable for them. As he distinguishes himself in this section as someone who is compassionate and concerned about the suffering of women, and who is intolerant of slavery and desirous of America's becoming free and Christian, he is not so much sidling up to his audience as he is drawing his readers away from slavery and toward him and his ideologies.

Craft cultivates a relationship with his readers not just by showing a desire to preserve the family unit and protect the defenseless but also by aligning himself and his wife with God and truth. From the outset of his narrative, he communicates the sense of God's over-arching presence in his and his wife's life. Articulating one of the thoughts

that haunted them for years, he observes, "we could not call the bones and sinews that God gave us our own" (1). This seemingly simple comment is an integral part of Craft's argument because it gives his readers a point of orientation. He wants them to read and react to his narrative in the light of the idea that God, as Creator, was their first owner and He bequeathed to them their bodies. According to this premise, the slave holders are robbing not only them but also God, and they are usurping God's position. That they hold slaves becomes evidence that they consider themselves higher than God. Contextualizing his narrative in this way, Craft asks his audience to read their escape as the story of how he and his wife restored God's gifts to their rightful owners. Because the imaged readers are Christians, his speaking of God as the Creator will strike a favorable chord with them, showing them that he worships the same Divinity as they do. His implied justification of their escape rhetorically leaves no room for his audience to fault him and his wife, for doing so would seem to suggest that they think that the slave holders' usurpation of God's position is acceptable and excusable.

Moving closer to his readers psychologically and spiritually and further delineating the character of God, Craft imagines another aspect of His power. While at the beginning of his narrative Craft speaks of God's creativity,

he later addresses God's vengeance. In what should be considered a jeremiad, he calls for his readers to choose their affiliation:

> There is, however, great consolation in knowing that God is just, and will not let the oppressor of the weak and the spoiler of the virtuous escape unpunished here and hereafter.
>
> I believe a similar retribution to that which destroyed Sodom is hanging over the slaveholders. My sincere prayer is that they may not provoke God, by persisting in a reckless course of wickedness, to pour out his consuming wrath upon them. (8-9)

By saying that he finds "great consolation" in the knowledge that God will avenge the wrongs committed against the weak and virtuous, he rhetorically crawls under the shadow of God's wings, thereby calling himself one of God's own and establishing a layer of insulation around his narrating self.[7] Through his acknowledgment of God's omnipotence, Craft separates himself from his slave master and moves closer to his readers' values. He subtly coaxes his audience to associate with him by inserting a few statements about God within a discussion of his own feelings. He indirectly calls upon his readers to agree or disagree with his point that "God is just" and that He will not allow the oppressor to go unpunished. The implication here is that

they will either side with him and answer in the affirmative or they will be declaring that God is unjust and that there will be no divine retribution. Juxtaposing victim and victimizer, Craft calls upon his audience to support one or the other. Rather than bluntly saying that the slave holders will be eternally damned for what they have done, which even to some members of his audience might sound self-righteous, he carefully couches his belief in the language of prayer and communicates a humble stance. Although he basically says that if the slave holders do not mend their ways--stop sexually assaulting women and enslaving people--they will incite God's severest judgment on them, he ingratiates himself with his readers by displaying a kind of beneficence. His words of warning convey the idea that he is concerned about the spiritual and eternal welfare of those who support slavery. One should read his "sincere prayer" as a method of distancing himself from slavery and drawing closer to the reader because it emphasizes a Christ-like response to the slave holders--showing a concern for the humanity of the very people who trampled on his own, just as Uncle Tom does with Simon Legree.

Craft further highlights his association with God by calling attention to their flight from slavery as a divinely-sanctioned mission. Throughout his narrative, he repeatedly reminds his readers of God's relationship with him, not only as his Creator but also as his guide. He

places these various references at crucial points in the narrated escape, such as when an officer stops him in Baltimore, the last notable slave port before the free state of Pennsylvania: "At first I scarcely knew which way to turn. But it soon occurred to me that the good God, who had been with us thus far, would not forsake us at the eleventh hour" (69). Communicating both his dependence on God and his belief that God travels with them on their journey, Craft attempts to put himself in an "untouchable" position with his audience. This is a way for him to beckon for their favor and blessing. He again does this shortly thereafter when he says that his wife "thanked God we were getting on so nicely" (70). Through these statements, Craft projects the idea of their gratefulness and humility, because rather than taking credit for their brilliant scheme and becoming self-lauding, he gives glory to God. This move, in turn, shows his audience that he shares their values, and it offers him some rhetorical protection. In presenting God as the one orchestrating their escape, he spiritually distances himself from slavery, and he obviates any criticism of their fleeing slavery with the implication that if one opposes their action, then one opposes God's leading.

The converse of this implication forms the basis of Craft's most direct appeal to his audience. At the point in his narrative when he speaks of their leaving the "mock-free

Republic" of America and, to his readers, might seem ungrateful, he pronounces a blessing on his audience:

> Oh! may God bless the thousands of unflinching, disinterested abolitionists of America, who are laboring through evil as well as through good report, to cleanse their country's escutcheon from the foul and destructive blot of slavery, and to restore to every bondman his God-given rights. (93-94)

Along with exhibiting his appreciation for the American abolitionists, Craft suggests that if they support him, they support the work of God because their abolitionist stance wages war on evil. In light of his prefatory comment that he wants to create in some minds a deeper abhorrence of slavery, one may read this blessing as an address to the abolitionists, non-abolitionists, and the undecided. For the latter two groups, he sets forth the reactions to slavery in opposing spiritual terms, indirectly saying that they can form an alliance with God (who values life), or they can support or tolerate slavery and form an alliance with evil (which pollutes and destroys life). In his blessing of the abolitionists, Craft leaves himself some rhetorical space. To those who are unyielding in their efforts, he gives affirmation, and to the "fair-weather" abolitionists, he provides a challenge, suggesting that to be effectual in their opposition to slavery, they cannot

base their efforts on self-interest or on the appearance and feeling of circumstances. Regardless of any reproof the various segments of his audience may feel, Craft effectively endorses abolitionism and aligns himself to his readers by appealing to their higher natures and capitalizing on their value systems.

While Craft's manipulation of the spatial configurations with his readers is important, nowhere is his impulse to distance himself more apparent and more imperative than with the slave holders and his former master. As with Harriet Jacobs, separating himself from slavery entails picturing himself on the side of God and depicting the slave holders as Others, exhibiting characteristics or practices which show them in league with the forces of darkness and destruction. Creating a picture to which his readers would want to identify themselves, he describes himself and the other slaves as "dear little ones," "defenseless creatures," and "faithful souls." By portraying slavery through this polarization, Craft tries to gain his audience's allegiance and emotionally and psychologically distance himself from his former master. As he effects this separation, he provides a measure of freedom for himself, verifying that he is no longer under the control of slavery.

Like Jacobs, Craft draws his readers toward him by arguing that slavery encourages values contrary to their

own. At the beginning of his narrative, he describes his master as a tyrant who stole their hard earnings "to enable him to live in idleness and luxury" and had the power to tear their God-given new-born baby from its cradle and sell it (1). Craft depicts slavery as a system which discourages a work ethic and promotes slothfulness. His imagined readers would oppose decadence and elevate family ties above pecuniary benefits. Craft implicitly asks his readers to imagine themselves in the same position as the slaves. If they would approve of the slave master's behavior, they would, in effect, deny their own beliefs and associate themselves with Satan's emissaries.

Arguing that the slave system thwarts the values of his audience, Craft repeatedly gives examples of how it has separated families, including Ellen's personal experience and his own. He describes how his wife, who is almost white though of African extraction on her mother's side, was sold away from her mother and several other dear friends by her tyrannical first mistress when she was eleven years old because she was often mistaken as a member of the old lady's family (2). Providing another illustration of this feature of slavery, he tells of his own desperate attempt to say good-bye to his sister after her new owner denies him the chance simply because he wants to set out immediately for his long trip home:

> I then turned to the auctioneer, fell upon my knees, and humbly prayed him to let me just step down and bid my last sister farewell. But, instead of granting me this request, he grasped me by the neck, and in a commanding tone of voice, and with a violent oath, exclaimed, 'Get up! You can do the wench no good; therefore there is no use in your seeing her.' (11)

By providing readers with scenes like this, Craft exposes the injustice of slavery to individuals, a vantage point which supporters of the system seem wholly to ignore. He not only shows that slavery acts as a destructive force to the person and the family but also illustrates the character of slave holders as malevolent. Craft highlights the capricious nature of both the tyrannical old lady and the auctioneer through the contrasting pictures of their victims, portraying Ellen as being torn away from her mother and dear friends because of something she had no control over--the fact that her skin was "too white" for her mistress's comfort and pride--and presenting himself as humbly beseeching the auctioneer's good will but being greeted with undeserved scorn. These examples argue the point that slavery enables the masters and dealers to act expediently. Although Craft had no recourse at the time, by exposing the system and its supporters as unmerciful, he shows that he does now.

The group of slave holders that, perhaps, should have begged for mercy in Craft's depiction of them are the hypocrites, those whom he most vehemently denounces in his narrative. By vividly projecting their Otherness, he psychologically distances himself from them. His desire and need to set himself apart from them is particularly strong because, as hypocrites, they generally will, at least on the surface, display a trait or practice with which he and his audience could identify. His old master, for instance, had the reputation of being a "very humane and Christian man," but he had no qualms about selling William's mother and father at separate times to different persons. Rather than bemoaning the earthly fate of his beloved parents, who were "devoted to the service of God," he separates himself from the power of slavery by suggesting that the eternal fate of his parents and their "Christian" master might not be the same:

> But how will the case stand with those reckless traffickers in human flesh and blood, who plunged the poisonous dagger of separation into those living hearts which God had for so many years closely joined together--nay, sealed as it were with his own hands for the eternal courts of heaven? (9)

Craft uses this question to guide his readers' responses to the man who sold his parents, to see the disparity between

his reputation and his actions. His indictment is more severe, however, than just accusing his old master of a contradiction because he holds him to account for not only selling and separating his parents but also directly assaulting God's handiwork. In choosing generic nouns to refer to the participants, he enriches the scene by making the accusation applicable on a larger scale. By using the interrogative mode, Craft implicitly argues that people cannot turn other human beings into merchandise and not be held accountable; though they may get away with it on earth, they will not in eternity. Unlike the effect a simple statement would have, his question draws out the point in the readers' minds.

In addition to using descriptions and rhetorical questions to depict the masters' and traders' moral depravity, Craft occasionally shows the Otherness of the slave holders through their own words. In one example of this, he gives voice to a wealthy elderly lady, who, sitting near his "master" on the train, warms her conscience with the cloak of the do-gooder as she wails to another passenger about the pecuniary loss she has suffered because ten of her slaves, "the ungrateful wretches," have run away:

> If my son and myself had the money for those valuable niggers, just see what a great deal of good we could do for the poor, and in sending missionaries abroad to the poor heathen, who have

> never heard the name of our blessed Redeemer. My dear son who is a good Christian minister has advised me not to worry and send my soul to hell for the sake of the niggers; but to sell every blessed one of them for what they will fetch, and go and live in peace with him in New York. (65)

In Craft's narrative, this scene functions as a "don't be fooled" sign to his readers, saying that evil can be heaped into the quaintest of packages, such as this one wrapped in religious piety. More than displaying incongruent actions as the scene with William's old master did, it illuminates warped thinking, showing this woman as so steeped to the core in her own sense of self-righteousness that she wallows comfortably in her hypocrisy.

Craft provides guidance for his audience's reactions to this scene when he quotes this woman's fellow passenger saying, "If she has religion, may the devil prevent me from ever being converted!" (67). This man serves as a mouth-piece for another point in Craft's argument: the religious hypocrisy that slavery feeds gives a bad name to Christianity. Craft may be seen as pulling his readers emotionally closer to him and abolitionism through this scene because he knows that they will recoil from the kind of "Christianity" that this elderly lady manifests and will want to give evidence that their own Christianity is different from hers. In showing his readers his own

discernment of how this woman's religious piety differs from genuine Christianity, Craft also psychologically distances himself from the Others. Through this episode he not only depicts this elderly woman as short-sighted, but also as inhumane.

Craft's repudiation of the slave holders, however, is not always so tame. Like Harriet Jacobs, he too sometimes pictures them supping with Satan. Usually such castigations take the form of labels such as "demon," "Judas," "licentious monsters," and "heartless wretch," but they also appear in more elaborate descriptions. One of the Others surfaces in the narrative as a "hard-featured, bristly-bearded, wire-headed, red-eyed monster," who stares at Ellen "as the serpent did at Eve" (47). Craft characterizes the wickedness of another group of masters through their reactions to runaways, noting that "nothing seems to give the slaveholders so much pleasure as the catching and torturing of fugitives" (28). He also argues that the slave holders do not just confine their malice to their own slaves: "The great majority of slaveholders hate this class of persons [free African-Americans] with a hatred that can only be equalled by the condemned spirits of the infernal regions" (37). These labels and descriptions suggest that slave holders have made a pact with the devil and are now happily doing his bidding. By defining the slave holders as vile, Craft sets himself psychologically apart from them and

shows them occupying an inferior position. Just as slave holders stigmatize slaves as animals, Craft now exposes their own spiritual "mark of the beast." With this polarization, he brings to light the forces of darkness that oppose the values and interests of his readers.

The various rhetorical techniques and tropes of distance which Craft employs play a vital role in his narrative. Working together, they become the means through which he can achieve some control over his life and his history and can establish his identity as a separate and autonomous entity from that which the slave system tried to mold. Along with enabling him to remove his current self from his position of subjugation, these strategies work to foster a relationship with his readers, mustering their support for the slaves and motivating them to show their own separation from the slave holders.

Narrative Structure of Romance

In addition to rhetorical strategies, Craft utilizes narrative structure to convey and confirm the idea that he and Ellen have achieved an emancipation from their slave experiences. Also using the Romantic mode of emplotment for his narrative, Craft represents their beginnings in much the same way Jacobs does. He mentions that he and his wife were born as slaves and that for years they were haunted by the idea that they were held as chattels and that another man

had the power to rip their family apart by selling their own baby or separating them. The crisis in their lives comes when they contemplate their helpless condition and decide to flee from the slave state of Georgia to go to Canada. Although in physically disguising themselves, she as an invalid gentleman and he as his faithful servant, they escape from their masters' immediate clutches and can physically move around in ways they could not previously, they have not yet left their world of experience. Craft provides evidence of this in his descriptions of how on the train and boat rides and in the ports and stations they are at every turn fully aware and fearful that they could be caught and forced back to their owners to suffer tortured deaths.

William and Ellen Craft's transcendence of the world of experience occurs upon arriving in Philadelphia. He likens his reaction at seeing the city lights to what Bunyan's Christian must have felt at seeing the cross: "I, like him, felt that the straps that bound the heavy burden to my back began to pop, and the load to roll off" (78-79). Because they have reached a free state, they believe they have been saved from slavery. Although they do not think of themselves as the slaves they were in Georgia, the transcendence takes place only in their minds. Despite their 1848 settlement in Boston, which according to the Philadelphia abolitionists was a safer place for escaped

slaves to reside, they still could be lawfully seized by their masters and forced back into slavery. He does acknowledge, however, that for two years they make a satisfactory life for themselves.

Though Craft comments that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 forced them to leave their home in Boston, it should be seen as another turning point for them in their emancipation process. While for the Crafts as slaves the Law was egregious--making them seek asylum in another country--it launches them into a new and better stage in their life. Their arrival in England appears as a victory over the world of experience: "It was not until we stepped upon the shore at Liverpool that we were free from every slavish fear" (108). They achieve their victory in successfully putting themselves out of reach of their oppressors. Earlier in his narrative Craft noted that in America it was illegal to teach a slave how to read or write, but he and his wife have now learned these skills and advanced their studies.

Like Jacobs, Craft achieves a liberation from slavery through writing his narrative. He too, however, emplots his story as a modified Romance. Although he evinces a psychological freedom from his oppressors by retrying his case and acquitting himself, he does not leave his readers with a picture of himself as having overcome all the ill effects of slavery. In the midst of describing how he and Ellen have improved during their time in England, he also

hints at their still being disadvantaged: "My wife and myself were able to spend a short time at a school in this country, to acquire a little of that education which we were so shamefully deprived of while in the house of bondage" (109). Structuring his story as a Romance allows Craft to exert figurative control over his master and to confirm that he has distanced himself from slavery and gained authority over his own history and its meaning.

Rather than concluding his story with a song of celebration, though, Craft ends his narrative on a discomforting note; he laments the various ways masters torture their slaves and writes the following verse:

> 'Oh, tyrant, thou who sleepest
> On a volcano, from whose pent-up wrath,
> Already some red flashes bursting up,
> Beware!' (111)

In modifying the Romance structure of his account in this way, he brings his readers back to the idea that for most slaves, their *story of slavery* is written by their masters. Though he leaves the readers with a severe warning, communicating the point that it is not only the fate of the slaves that is at stake here, the jeremiad promotes a sense of urgency rather than despair because through it he implicitly argues that America can wake up. With this ending, he indicates the real possibility that unless

slavery is abolished, the history of America may be emplotted as a Tragedy.

Heteroglossia of Authenticating Documents

The conclusion of Craft's narrative is not the only place where its author suggests that his story includes more than his own history. He, as well as Harriet Jacobs, overtly implements heteroglossia to show that his identity should be understood in a wider context. These accounts share the explicit recognition that their narratives are a brief sampling of the story of slavery. Craft claims, "This book is not intended as a full history of the life of my wife, nor of myself; but merely as an account of our escape" (iii-iv). In making this clarification, he frames his account within the larger context of slavery. The heteroglot language he specifically presents highlights the idea that within any one situation there will be numerous ways to interpret the power structures between different socio-ideological bodies. By deliberately using heteroglossia to recoup the context of his enslavement figuratively, Craft, like Jacobs, affirms the validity of his own voice, which had been legally denied in slavery, and exposes the Otherness of the slave holders. He thus psychologically distances himself from slavery.

Craft's explicit heteroglossia basically takes the form of literary allusions or quotations which express the trials

and injustices of slavery, or it materializes as quotations from laws or preachers which support slavery. The first sample of this heteroglot language in his narrative is the epigraph to Part I:

> God gave us only over beast, fish, fowl,
> Dominion absolute; that right we hold
> By his donation. But man over man
> He made not lord; such title to himself
> Reserving, human left from human free.
>
> Milton. (1)

By invoking Milton, Craft bolsters his own credibility and establishes a context in which his account should be read. In this epigraph, Milton's character suggests that man has absolute sovereignty only over animal life and that that is a power that he would not have except that God gave it to him. It is not man, but God only, who can rule over man. Similarly, the crux of Craft's argument is that the slave owners and traders have appropriated a power over others that does not rightly belong to them. The inclusion of this passage from Paradise Lost also articulates a contradiction between the present and the past; it points to the beginning of time, when men and women were free and respectful of one another, implying that present conditions indicate that slave holders have tried to usurp God's position. In using this literary reference, Craft images his readers as educated and borrows the authority of Milton.

In addition to Milton, Craft brings in other literary figures such as Shakespeare, John Bunyan, Thomas Campbell, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and James Russell Lowell. As he describes his and his wife's travels, he alludes to Christian and Hopeful in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress who need to resist the example of Mistrust and Timorous who turn back to the City of Destruction. In using this reference, Craft argues that their escape was much more than a physical trip; for them it was also a spiritual and psychological journey. He aligns his wife and himself with God, saying that He was a "present and mighty helper in this as well as in all former trials" (71), and indirectly argues that the slave traders and owners are allies of Satan. The readers Craft writes to undoubtedly are familiar with this allegory and hold it in high esteem. Pilgrim's Progress may be the work which comes closest to representing the suffering which the slaves endured and with which the readers could most identity. Although Craft only mentions Harriet Beecher Stowe two times in passing, it is noteworthy that he alludes to Uncle Tom's Cabin. By mentioning this book, he suggests that his readers have a familiarity with it--and thus abolitionist rhetoric--and that, despite it being a fictional novel, he finds it an accurate representation of the slavery system. His numerous literary allusions and incorporation of poetry into his story may hint at the idea

that he believes his narrative has a literary as well as a social and moral value.

The written law provides Craft with heteroglossia for his narrative. Before giving the account of their escape, he quotes the slavery laws from the states of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Georgia. Louisiana and South Carolina utterly consign slaves to the power of their masters and deny them all rights. The Constitution of Georgia, on the other hand, states that anyone who dismembers or kills a slave will stand trial as though he killed a free white person, except in cases of insurrection or accidental death resulting from moderate correction (14). Another section of the law, however, states that a slave may strike a white person who is harming his master's animal, but if he fights to defend his daughter's chastity, he may legally be killed. Craft cites these laws to emphasize the legal tyranny which the slave must face. They also serve to establish a context of injustice, which he uses to justify his flight to freedom. While as a slave he could not address laws, through his narrative he can now refute them and show their contradictory values.

Craft also makes use of an indictment within his narrative to expose the false logic and utter hypocrisy within the judicial system. The accused, Margaret Douglass, is characterized as an "evil disposed person, not having the fear of God before her eyes" (32). Her crime was that,

having been wickedly and maliciously moved by the devil on July 4, 1854, she taught a black girl to read the Bible, "to the great displeasure of Almighty God" (33). If Margaret Douglass had been an "evil disposed person" who did not fear God, she would not be teaching a black girl, or anyone, to read the Bible. By presenting this indictment, Craft dramatically illustrates the numerous contradictions inherent within pro-slavery rhetoric, and he argues that even in court justice is not blind.

To display the argument of the Other, Craft makes use of the sermon extract. He quotes at least nine clergymen of various denominations who strongly defend the Fugitive Slave Bill. Delivering a sermon, Rev. W. M. Rogers said, "When the slave asks me to stand between him and his master, what does he ask? He asks me to murder a nation's life; and I will not do it, because I have a conscience--because there is a God" (322). Rev. Orville Dewey tries to justify the Fugitive Slave Bill by declaring that he himself would be willing to send one of his own family members into slavery, if necessary for maintaining the Union between the free and the slave states. Counseling the slave, he argues that if by supporting the slave's claim of freedom he brings upon his and the slave's race greater disasters than what the slave might have to endure, then "in such a case personal rights ought to be sacrificed to the general good. You yourself ought to see this, and be willing to suffer for a

while--one for many" (97). Although as a slave, Craft would never be allowed to testify on his own behalf or on the behalf of his race, he now, in retrying his case through his narrative, makes a rebuttal with sound reasoning. He suggests that Rev. Dewey may at any time feel welcome to sacrifice his own rights for the general good and that to carry out his logic, Dewey ought to take Craft's place. Putting these clergymen up on trial, he argues that they have overlooked a few passages within their own text--Deuteronomy 23: 15-16; Isaiah 16: 3-4--which indicate that slaves have a right to run away and that no one has the right to send them back to slavery. In quoting from these sermons, Craft makes the clergymen stand accountable before him. Whereas in their sermons they have erased the slaves' faces by describing them in almost clinical terms, the clergymen are, in essence, forced now to recognize the individual, for Craft talks back to them by upbraiding them with their own book. He displays the heteroglot nature of language by taking their sermons, which were delivered as monologues, and making them into dialogues, thus visually opening the text by presenting the internal dialogization of discourse.

While the legal system held up the language of masters and traders as sacrosanct and suppressed the language of the slaves, Craft's narrative, giving free play to a multiplicity of voices, figuratively refutes the supposition

that the slave holders' mono-voice is pre-eminent, and it lends credence to the legitimacy of Craft's own voice. The employment of overt heteroglossia further serves to create a psychological barrier between himself and his oppressors, marking off his identity as no longer dictated by his master.

Levels of Freedom Imagined and Realized

As with Jacobs's account, Craft's narration traces his movement away from his master. To understand what kind of freedom Craft attains, one needs to examine how he has been bound and how he has conceptualized freedom. Though he does not spend as much time directly speaking of his own enslavement as Jacobs does in her story, one may still find references which indicate that he has distanced his narrating self from his enslaved self. Both he and Jacobs make an important contribution to the genre of the slave narrative by illustrating how the realization of freedom becomes problematized with the Fugitive Slave Law.

The first image of freedom that Craft gives his readers appears in the title of his narrative, Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery. Through this title, he both communicates his and Ellen's desperateness and determination to leave slavery and, playing on his old expectations, gives his readers the impression that freedom is achieved simply through physical

means. He does, however, accurately reflect the nature of his narrative in suggesting that freedom is a matter of relocating one's self.

As with most slaves, William and Ellen Craft have been enslaved with more than just physical fetters and the geographical perimeters of their masters' plantations. At the outset of his narrative, Craft reveals additional ways they were bound: "It is true, our condition as slaves was not by any means the worst; but the mere idea that we were held as chattels, and deprived of all legal rights . . . haunted us for years" (1-2). This comment shows the readers that these two slaves have also suffered legal enslavement and emotional and psychological bondage. Craft here recognizes that their masters dictated their political identities and that the power of the Others affected them so deeply that it controlled their emotions.

Before beginning the story of their escape, Craft provides background information about his own personal history which further emphasizes his bondage as being more than physical. He describes the "red-hot indignation" he felt toward the auctioneer who refused to let him say good-bye to his sister:

> It quenched my tears, and appeared to set my brain on fire, and made me crave for power to avenge our wrongs! But, alas! we were only slaves, and had no legal rights; consequently we were compelled to

> smother our wounded feelings, and crouch beneath the iron heel of despotism. (13)

Although Craft as the narrating self clearly expresses the kinds of feelings his enslaved self had at this moment, one can also see him as guiding his audience's reaction to his emotions. He knows that his audience could certainly sympathize with feeling sorrow and indignation at being denied the chance to say a last farewell to a sister, but he also knows that his readers would not want to condone feelings of vengeance. Consequently, one should read Craft's comment that his indignation "appeared to set my brain on fire"--a projection of an outsider's perspective--as his attempt to justify and soften his subsequently expressed desire for vengeance, which could otherwise seem like a characteristic of the Other. This scene also highlights the contrast between his narrating self and his enslaved self, for while he depicts his emotional immobilization in slavery, he now gives free vent to his feelings.[8]

In speaking of what convinced Ellen to accept his proposed escape plan and wear a disguise, Craft indirectly defines her conception of freedom:

> She saw that the laws under which we lived did not recognize her to be a woman, but a mere chattel, to be bought and sold, or otherwise dealt with as her owner might see fit. Therefore the more she

> contemplated her helpless condition, the more anxious she was to escape from it. (30)

This description suggests she believes that freedom will mean the legal recognition of their humanity and the personal autonomy to control their own bodies and that it can be obtained by leaving their masters and the slave states. They experience one of these two things before even reaching the slave states. Though Craft does not specifically acknowledge it as such, their physical disguise affords them a measure of freedom. Dressed as a white invalid slave owner with green spectacles and poultices wrapped around her head, Ellen is able to buy train tickets for herself and William and avoids being recognized by an old friend of her master's who sits down beside her in the carriage, though he knew her from childhood. Being dressed as her slave, William too experiences some physical freedom because he appears in public without being accosted as a runaway slave; people assume he is the invalid's lawful property. This situation, nevertheless, is only a partial physical liberation. Despite the fact that they are able to physically move around on trains without having their "true" legal identities as slaves detected, they still are emotionally enslaved, a point which becomes apparent in Craft's narration of their Baltimore port experience when, as standard procedure, they need to verify the invalid's right to take his slave on to Philadelphia: "We felt that

our very existence was at stake, and that we must either sink or swim" (70-71). During their flight to the free states, their emotions are constantly at the mercy of someone else because they fear detection.

William and Ellen finally achieve *an* emotional freedom and *a* greater physical freedom when they arrive in Philadelphia. Because it is a "free state," they believe that they have escaped from slavery and are no longer subject to their masters' control. Describing his emotional state then, William comments, "It appeared very wonderful to me how the mere sight of our first city of refuge should have all at once made my hitherto sad and heavy heart become so light and happy" (79). He also notes Ellen as having a similar response: "Thank God, William, we are safe!" (79) His description of their prayer, in which they thank God for enabling them to escape "out of the jaws of the wicked," further suggests that at this point they think and feel that they are no longer enslaved.

Contrary to one critic's contention that the narrative should have ended here because the pace of Part II does not match that of the first flight,[9] Part II is vitally important to the meaning of the narrative because Craft shows how elusive freedom is for them. Upon the advice of the Philadelphia abolitionists, he and Ellen move on to Boston, which is considered safer. Although, as Craft notes, the slave holders have always had the right to come

into the free states and take their fugitives back into slavery, public opinion in Massachusetts was so against slavery and kidnapping that that rarely happened. Craft indicates that because of this atmosphere, they settled comfortably in Boston and were "getting on very well," with the potential for becoming financially successful. His description of their situation reveals that they were experiencing both physical and emotional freedom. They had, in part, realized the kind of freedom that they had earlier envisioned for themselves. They now led their own bodies; they were no longer helpless. Their legal status, however, was not what they imagined it would be. While Massachusetts might not call them chattel, it officially allowed slave holders to reclaim them as their "property."

What threatens their freedom and forces them to leave America to save their liberties and their lives is the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. This enactment essentially erases the physical distance they have put between themselves and their oppressors and nullifies the kind of freedom they thought they had gained in leaving the slave states. Unlike Jacobs, who does not gain her legal freedom until 1852, Craft spends only a short time in the United States after the Fugitive Slave Bill passes into law. His representation of their reaction to the Law is also not as lengthy or direct as Jacobs's. It is through indirection--a reprinted letter of introduction from Rev. Samuel May of

Boston, to Mr. Estlin of Bristol--that one discovers that "a writ was served against them [William and Ellen Craft] from the United States District Court" (89). May tells how Ellen was taken to a secluded place outside of Boston while William stayed in their house and armed himself against the slave-catchers, refusing even the offer of a Whig gentleman to buy him and Ellen from their owners if he would submit peaceably to the Marshall:

> Craft replied, in effect, that he was in a measure the representative of all the other fugitives in Boston, some 200 or 300 in number; that, if he gave up, they would all be at the mercy of the slave-catchers, and must fly from the city at any sacrifice; and that, if his freedom could be bought for two cents, he would not consent to compromise the matter in such a way. (90)

Because Craft includes the letter, the account of his reaction seems to meet with his approval. From it, then, one can recover some of his commentary on freedom. Because Craft turns down the Whig's offer to buy their freedom, one can discern that his conception of freedom has evolved not only from what it was in Georgia but also from what it was when he and his wife first came to Boston. Although the kind of freedom they are being offered would provide them with a legal recognition of their humanity and prevent their masters from regaining control over their bodies, accepting

it would, for Craft, be like his agreeing that he did not already possess the natural, God-given right to his own body.

To attain the kind of liberty that Craft now conceives of, he and Ellen must leave America. That they finally gain their physical and legal freedom in England can be seen in his description of their new homeland, which is a

> truly free and glorious country; where no tyrant, let his power be ever so absolute over his poor trembling victims at home, dare come and lay violent hands upon us or upon our dear little boys . . . and reduce us to the legal level of the beast that perisheth. (93)

Although while in Boston they experienced an amount of emotional freedom, the Fugitive Slave Law effectively re-enslaved their emotions. Upon arriving in Liverpool, however, the Crafts lose "every slavish fear" (108) and know complete emotional freedom. They no longer have to look back over their shoulders and make sure that their former masters or some other supporters of slavery have not discovered them. In England, they are legally recognized as human beings and accorded the rights and privileges thereof.

The matter of the Crafts' psychological freedom is not quite as clear as it is with Jacobs. The last picture he gives of Ellen and himself involves their schooling experience. While educational training reflects personal

advancement and a psychological separation from slavery, it also reveals that Craft might still feel intellectually disadvantaged because slavery has "shamefully deprived" him of such opportunities in the past. During the narration of his story, he repeatedly effects a psychological distance from the Others and from his enslaved self, but he may likely never have found an absolute psychological freedom. One critic, for example, has argued that the images of slave torturing with which Craft ends his story indicate that he still holds on to these images and is not yet free.[10] While such an assertion may be true, Craft's inclusion of these images brings the readers' attention back to America and leaves them with the sense that they cannot ignore the reality of these horrific scenes any longer. The location of these images also, by contrast, heightens the idea of Craft's own emancipation, and it implies that his narrating self is so far removed from slavery that he has the freedom to put aside the story of his enslaved self and focus on unresolved issues.

As an ante-bellum slave narrator writing after 1850, William Craft, along with Harriet Jacobs, contributes to the history of slavery and the literary genre of the slave narrative by illustrating how the Fugitive Slave Law revolutionized the conception of freedom for slaves. He shows how the kinds of bondage from which fugitive slaves had freed themselves threatened to enslave them once again.

A physical separation from slavery could no longer be used to gauge their freedom because, under the Fugitive Slave Law, geographical barriers between fugitives and their oppressors meant nothing. Consequently, when slaves knew their physical freedom was in question, other kinds of freedom also became more elusive. The slave narrators of this time period have a strong reason for contending that the free states were not so free after all.

NOTES

[1] John Blassingame, in his chapter "Critical Essays on Sources" of The Slave Community, tells of how, much to the embarrassment of the abolitionists, a Negro, pretending to be a fugitive slave, wrote this account and hoodwinked John Greenleaf Whittier into editing it. The slave holders exposed it as fraudulent. He also mentions the names of other slave narratives which he considers fictional.

Unless otherwise noted, in this study "slave narrative(s)" refers to the autobiographical rather than the fictional form.

[2] Through the correspondence between Harriet Jacobs and Amy Post, which Lydia Maria Child includes within her edition (as apparently Jacobs had originally intended to do), one discovers that Jacobs had been reluctant about writing her account until she realized holding it back would be "unchristian" if it could help save another from her fate (232) and that she later decided to ask Harriet Beecher Stowe to write it. In writing her own narrative, Jacobs utilizes her original reluctance to ingratiate herself with her white middle-class audience.

[3] For the most part, scholars treat William Craft's narrative as authentic. Two critics who specifically comment on its authorship are John W. Blassingame and Marion Starling. One should note a discrepancy in judgment, however, between two of Blassingame's discussions of whether

Craft's narrative can be accepted as the actual words of the former slave. In The Slave Community, he identifies the narrative of William and Ellen Craft as one of those with which he has compared other antebellum letters and speeches by its ascribed author and found this check "reveals unmistakable similarities in style" (371). In his article, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems," he contradicts this reading:

> Several of the blacks, for example, made and wrote numerous speeches and letters antedating the publication of their narratives. When these records are compared with published accounts, it is obvious that many of the editors tried to write the details of the fugitive's life as he dictated them. This is especially true of the narratives of Lewis G. Milton Clark, Josiah Henson, William and Ellen Craft, and Henry Box Brown. (83)

Starling, whose analysis is much more substantial and believable, cites an article which, appearing in the London Morning Advertiser and being reprinted in the Liberator on September 26, 1851, indicates that the Crafts had been accepted as pupils in the Ockham Schools, near Ripley, Surrey, and were well-accommodated in their education. After describing the Crafts' lecture tour, she also points out that in November of 1852, William mentioned his plan to write a slave narrative and that his progress in the art of

writing can be traced in his yearly letters to William Lloyd Garrison: "According to the evidence of his letters, each year brought improvement in William Craft's grammar, his ability to paragraph his material, and his style" (237). From this evidence and the fact that through his subscription to the Liberator he kept up with the abolitionists' movement in America, Starling concludes, "There is no reason for questioning his ability to produce Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery, which was published in London by Tweedie in 1860, a dozen years after that escape" (237-38).

[4] All references to Craft's narrative are to the first edition and will be cited parenthetically.

[5] Karen A. Getman notes that although slaves visibly appreciated their family units, there was a wide-spread belief among colonists that the African-Americans had abnormal sexual drives and indiscriminately found sexual partners. Craft may be trying to debunk such a stereotype in this digression.

[6] See William Andrews's chapter "Culmination of a Century" in To Tell a Free Story and Francis Smith Foster for discussions of how male narrators generally refer to female slaves collectively and give the impression that for women, rape or seduction was unavoidable.

[7] See Sacvan Bercovitch's chapter "Ritual of Consensus" for an insightful examination of how the jeremiad was used to initiate revolution in the War of Independence. Some slave narrators appropriated that form in an attempt to effect a secular and spiritual revolution against slavery.

[8] Bertram Wyatt-Brown contends that to escape shame and humiliation, male slaves had to cover-up their emotions and assume a position of confidence. Part of their degradation, then, was in showing their vulnerability. As a young man in this situation, Craft probably suffered not only in seeing his sister sold off but also in naturally showing his emotional attachment in the presence of slave holders and traders.

[9] Mary Ellen Doyle argues that Craft should have ended his narration after they arrived in Philadelphia or Boston because the flight in Part II does not match the pace of the first flight and it does not hold the same interest.

[10] See Raymond Hedin's "Strategies" for a thoughtful discussion of the "final openness" of Craft's narrative.

CHAPTER FOUR
William Wells Brown

Ushering William and Ellen Craft into the inner sanctuary of the anti-slavery societies and arranging a New England lecture tour for them was a man who had himself already run some miles for freedom.[1] No stranger to slavery's pit of horrors, William Wells Brown first captured the attention of Americans nearly two years earlier with his best-selling account, Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself (1847). Ranking a close second to Frederick Douglass's narrative in popularity--and in some areas surpassing it--Brown's story is one of the most frequently studied slave narratives, its author having gained recognition not just as an abolitionist speaker and writer but also as a novelist.[2]

Scholars accept, indisputably, the authorship and authenticity of Brown's slave narrative.[3] The critical reception of his account, however, has not garnered such unanimous approval. One of his contemporaries, though acknowledging the narrative's "very wide influence on public opinion," complained that it was one of those that portrayed the Slave States as a large jail, with *all* of the whites conspiring against the slaves for profit or pleasure.[4] More recently, James Olney has leveled the charge that, except for Frederick Douglass's narrative, even "the most highly regarded of the other narratives," Brown's being named among them, simply present "conventions untransformed and

unredeemed" (158). For some of the slave narratives, such a reading is short-sighted, suggesting that the former slaves have no personal reason for composing or that they merely repeat what other slave narrators have done without any thought or personal investment in their own writing. While a cursory reading allows one to recognize the conventions a narrator follows, an in-depth analysis of Brown's narrative reveals that, as with the other slave narrators in this study, he not only writes to bolster the abolitionist movement but also works out his own freedom and his sense of self through tropes of distance and space.

Rhetorical Strategies and Tropes of Distance and Space

Although Harriet Jacobs and William Craft share with William Wells Brown the experience of having been fugitive slaves at least one time in their lives, Brown's vantage point as a slave narrator differs from theirs in a few significant ways. Writing his account more than ten years earlier, he has not yet been faced with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850; consequently, his concept of freedom and his representation of it are not subject to the same kind of re-evaluation and frustration that Jacobs and Craft are later. They also compose their narratives from safer positions. Whereas Jacobs has gained her legal and physical freedom by the time she writes her narrative, and Craft (though not legally free in America) has removed himself to England

where he is legally and physically free, Brown writes from America while still a fugitive. Brown's situation may explain why he chooses not to include the same kind of vociferations Jacobs and Craft do in their narratives. Because of his precarious position, he would potentially put himself at greater risk if he overtly revealed as much of his consciousness. While Brown may not be as outspoken in his writing as some slave narrators, he still demonstrates a desire to regulate the distances between himself and his enslaved self, audience, and oppressors.

Unlike Jacobs, who maintains a fairly consistent storyline throughout her narrative, both Craft and Brown frequently make use of digressions to distance themselves from their enslaved selves. Craft includes tangential material which does not explicitly involve himself, but he always brings his readers back to his and Ellen's journey to the North. Brown, on the other hand, uses interpolated stories to which he is indirectly connected, but his account, rather than being about one stage in his life or about the time from his birth through his escape, is largely episodic in nature. These tangents, however, form a crucial part of his narrative, for, as Sidonie Smith asserts, "the accumulative impact of the digressive material renders the grim reality of slavery inescapable" and creates a kind of protest literature (8). Brown's digressions enable him to communicate the larger and more variegated picture of

slavery, reminding his readers that when he speaks of his own sufferings, he also gives voice to those still in bondage.

Presenting his audience with sketches in which he does not appear allows Brown to emphasize certain facets of slavery which he may not have personally experienced, to highlight the Otherness--that which threatens the slave's body and self--of his oppressors and the slave holders, and to provide himself with an emotional respite from his enslaved self. An example of this can be seen in his story about John Colburn, keeper of the Missouri Hotel and Brown's new employer to whom his master has leased him. He tells of a slave named Patsey who worked for Colburn as a servant. Because one evening she went to see her fiancé, whom Colburn had forbidden her to see, her employer tied her up and whipped her until some of his boarders came out and begged him to stop. Brown notes that supposedly he had forbidden her to see this man because he was jealous, having a "regard" for her himself. Despite working for Colburn for some length of time, Brown records this and another story of Colburn's abuse of slaves but does not mention any incident involving himself. He does, however, conclude the Patsey episode with a scathing assessment of his employer's character: "If all the slave-drivers had been called together, I do not think a more cruel man than John Colburn--and he too a northern man--could have been found among

them" (33).[5] By giving these examples in which he does not figure, Brown directs his audience's attention to Colburn's actions rather than to himself, who may or may not have suffered abuse from this employer. These digressions serve as a reminder to his readers that when he shows how a slave holder or slavery supporter has treated him harshly, they should not read these as isolated incidents of abuse, but rather "mere" samples of the pervasive brutality of slavery. Through his inclusion of these other cases, he also rhetorically takes himself away from the passive position of his enslaved self, in which he received harsh treatment, and instead locates himself in the authoritative position of exposing the Otherness of his oppressors.

In some places in his narrative, Brown effects a distance between himself and his enslaved self by presenting words of reassurance from his family when his actions might otherwise be questioned by his audience. One instance of this appears as he narrates a time when, working as a waiter on a steamboat, he thinks of escaping to Canada but cannot bear the idea of leaving his family behind in slavery: "When these thoughts came over me, I would resolve never to leave the land of slavery without my mother. I thought that to leave her in slavery, after she had undergone and suffered so much for me, would be proving recreant to the duty which I owed to her" (35). Brown here displays an awareness of his readers' ideologies. While they may

certainly understand his desire to be free, he realizes that they would not condone his leaving slavery without a thought about the family he would leave behind. Speaking of the sacrifices his mother has made for him and the duty he feels he owes her shows his audience that he is a grateful and respectful son, who is also capable of self-sacrifice.

Suggesting that he and his readers have these values in common, Brown strategically sets up the scene that follows and guides reader reactions to it. He describes how in one visit to his family he alludes to a proposed trip to Canada, and his sister tearfully asks whether he is going to leave her and their mother in slavery without a friend. In an emotional response, he declares he will never desert them, but his sister, in turn, appears to have a change of heart:

> Brother, you have often declared that you would not end your days in slavery. I see no possible way in which you can escape with us; and now, brother, you are on a steamboat where there is some chance for you to escape to a land of liberty. I beseech you not to let us hinder you. If we cannot get our liberty, we do not wish to be the means of keeping you from a land of freedom. (36)

While this scene, at the end of which Brown renews his pledge "not to leave them in the hand of the oppressor," contains some changes in attitude and may not seem to

accomplish much in practical terms for Brown as a slave, it serves a few important functions in his narrative. He, in part, can be seen directing this conversation toward his audience, for, coming against a racial stereotype, it demonstrates the idea that slave families do experience emotional pain and agony when their members are separated from each other, whether separation is initiated by themselves or their oppressors. Depicting his family as caring, loving, understanding, and united, he presents a picture with which his readers could identity, thereby moving himself closer to them psychologically. Because he eventually leaves his sister behind when she is "sold down river" and he escapes slavery, this scene also may be read as Brown's attempt to distance himself from his enslaved self. He could so easily have briefly summarized the gist of this scene or eliminated it, but it would not have the same effect as it does now. The inclusion of his sister's words suggests that he deems them significant. What, for Brown, makes her words worthy to quote is that she implores him to seek his freedom and not to avoid any chances to escape on their account. In sharing what his sister says, he can alleviate the feelings of helplessness he experienced as a slave when he said his last farewell to her before she was sold further south, knowing that she herself did not believe they could escape from slavery together. Moreover, through this scene, he psychologically moves away from any

self-recrimination he may have felt in leaving his family behind to escape, reminding himself and his audience that he had his sister's blessings.

Brown distances himself from his enslaved self in a similar way as he narrates his visit to see his mother in jail after their failed attempt to escape from slavery. Having finally convinced his mother to flee with him from slavery, despite her strong reservations about leaving her other children behind, only to see her now sitting in jail before being taken to New Orleans, Brown tells his readers that he begged her forgiveness, thinking he was to blame for her present situation. In his mother's response, however, he finds words of reassurance:

> *My dear son, you are not to blame for my being here. You have done nothing more nor less than your duty. Do not, I pray you, weep for me. I cannot last long upon a cotton plantation. I feel that my heavenly Master will soon call me home, and then I shall be out of the hands of the slave-holders!* (55)

Through recording this scene, Brown accomplishes several noteworthy things. The very nature of this dialogue appeals to his audience's emotions because it vividly shows slavery's strangulation of the family and the victims' sense of powerlessness. Brown here displays an awareness that his readers may want to hold him partially responsible for his

mother's fate, but he rhetorically puts himself in a better light with them by exhibiting his feelings of guilt and regret, which conveys the idea that he is repentant for any harm he may have caused. In presenting his mother's comments and her subsequent urging--"Now try to get your liberty!" (56)--he creates a layer of insulation around himself, making him impervious to any reproach his audience may have directed toward him because he fled slavery without his family. His mother's own words, then, become a means through which he can assuage his sense of culpability for her being in a worse condition now, thus further removing himself from his actions and feelings as a slave.

As with Jacobs and Craft, Brown also makes use of humor to separate himself from his enslaved self, though his narrative contains fewer and briefer instances. One example of this appears in his description of the daily ritual of prayer which his first master, Dr. John Young, observed after he "got religion." Brown tells of how his master and mistress were "great lovers of mint julep" and would have a pitcher of it made up each morning before prayer time, which he, as a house servant, was compelled to attend:

> After drinking freely all around, they would have family worship, and then breakfast. I cannot say but I loved the julep as well as any of them, and during prayer was always careful to seat myself close to the table where it stood, so as to help

> myself when they were all busily engaged in their devotions. By the time prayer was over, I was about as happy as any of them. (37-38)

With this description Brown provides for his readers some light-hearted relief from the somberness of his sufferings in slavery and communicates a few important ideas as well. While on the surface this scene seems jovial, Brown subtly points to a more sobering underside. The message he delivers is that the "religion" of his master was not doing as much for him as the mint juleps were. He implies that for him to come anywhere near the level of happiness of his master's family would mean that his state of consciousness would have to be so altered that he would forget his position as a slave. Fittingly, what Brown here demonstrates is an alteration in thinking. By incorporating humor into his story, he moves his narrating self away from a subservient position and shows that he is in command of his history.

Brown occasionally employs humor for strictly personal reasons, without directing criticism toward any of the slave holders, such as in his description of a time when, during his flight from slavery, he had to ask for food at a farm-house because he had used up his provisions and was faint with hunger. In telling of how, though the husband refused him, the wife came to the door and, at the risk of upsetting

her husband, insisted that they give him food, Brown reveals his gratefulness:

> She asked him two or three times to get out of the way, and let me in. But as he did not move, she pushed him on one side, bidding me walk in! I was never before so glad to see a woman push a man aside! Ever since that act, I have been in favor of 'woman's rights!' (67)

In addition to expressing his appreciation for this "angel of mercy," Brown sends out an appeal to a certain segment of his audience, with the implication that the same government which tramples on the dignity of the African-Americans and slaves also subjugates women. The humor that he infuses into this scene further aids him in articulating the difference between the positions of his narrating self and his then enslaved self. Choosing a comic tone for describing this situation of having to beg for food--where he is utterly dependent upon the mercy of strangers--enables him to remove himself psychologically from his sense of desperation over his plight. It also attests to the idea that he has taken the control of his circumstances away from the slave holders.

Brown most vividly reveals his impulse to separate himself from his enslaved self when he presents certain schemes he has undertaken which might inadvertently prompt his readers to call his character into question. In one

case, he describes how he upset his employer Mr. Walker by accidentally filling some wine glasses too full, which resulted in his guests' spilling wine on their clothes. The next day, Walker gave Brown a note and a dollar to take to the jailer. Having found out from a sailor who read him the note that he was to be whipped, Brown tricked a free African-American about his same size by "paying" him to go get a "trunk" for him at the jail, knowing that Walker knew the jailer and might find out if he did not go there. He further authenticates the charade by paying the whipped man for the jailer's receipt and wetting his own cheeks before returning to his employer to convince Walker that he has received his punishment. Narrating this incident, Brown revels in his own cleverness, for it affords him the opportunity to demonstrate that, although slavery has denied him the opportunity to learn how to read and write and his employer has tried to exploit that disadvantage, he can more than match wits with Walker. By showing his readers that he has beaten him at his own game, he rhetorically effects a reversal in the power structure of the relationship.

While Brown may relish the effectiveness of his scheme, he never loses sight of his audience. By controlling the picture he gives of himself and Walker, he guides his readers' responses to that depiction. Carefully mitigating any disapproval his audience might have for him, he depicts deception as a means of survival for one subject to slavery:

> This incident shows how it is that slavery makes its victims lying and mean; for which vices it afterwards reproaches them, and uses them as arguments to prove that they deserve no better fate. Had I entertained the same views of right and wrong which I do now, I am sure I should never have practised [sic] the deception upon that poor fellow which I did. I know of no act committed by me while in slavery which I have regretted more than that; and I heartily desire that it may be at some time or other in my power to make him amends for his vicarious sufferings in my behalf. (47)

This paragraph serves a vitally important function in Brown's narrative. Without it, his readers would be likely, and seemingly justified, to view him in the same light in which he has shown the slave holders. Brown prevents that, however, by acknowledging his wrongdoing--though never actually declaring himself culpable--but doing it in such a generic way that he emphasizes to his audience the fact that he and the rest of the slaves have been victimized, not that he has lied or been mean. In essence, what he does is try to put a space between himself and the character of the Others by justifying his actions.

Such strategies as this have prompted some critics to link the slave narrative with the picaresque tradition. Raymond Hedin, for one, identifies Brown as one of the

picaro slave narrators who turn the argument around, "using slave 'immorality' as further evidence against the absurdity and immorality of the slavery system and in support of abolition" ("American" 638).[6] Demonstrating this reversal of culpability, Brown carefully mitigates the Otherness his readers might perceive in his actions by ascribing those deceptions to the effects of slavery. He argues, as Jacobs does in narrating the Sands episode, that sometimes slaves do things that they do not know are "unacceptable" because they have grown up under the demoralized system of slavery and that sometimes they are forced into doing things that go against their own values or those of the audience. Both narrators encourage their readers to withhold judgment on their own questionable actions by suggesting that because of the slaves' position and situational pressures peculiar to it, they should not be held to the same ethical standards as those who are not enslaved. Just as Brown made use of the free African-American to take his whipping for him, he takes rhetorical advantage of this scene to fend off any censure from his audience and redirect it toward the slave holders. To move himself away from his enslaved self and closer to his readers, he identifies himself as now having a different value system from that which he had as a slave. He courts their approval of this new value system--and no doubt gains it--in saying that he would now turn away from using deception and in showing himself as wanting to make penance.

The presentation of another deception becomes a means through which Brown can also move away from his position as a slave. He describes how his last owners, the Prices, tried to match him up with a slave named Eliza. Before describing a few lies that he told them, he guides his readers into a proper frame of mind for viewing his responses, saying that he had determined never to marry until he had his liberty but needed to keep that resolution a secret so that he would not provoke suspicion as to his intention to escape. He prefaces his deception with a defense and then communicates a sense of urgency to his readers: "I must keep upon good terms with Mrs. Price and Eliza. I therefore promised Mrs. Price that I would marry Eliza; but said that I was not then ready" (59). In framing his lie this way, Brown displays an awareness that what he is describing might not sit well with his readers. He subtly argues, nevertheless, that his precarious situation justified his reacting as he did, and that, consequently, his audience should bear that in mind and not judge his lie harshly.

Brown shows the vital necessity of this deception later when he describes how on a boat trip down to New Orleans with the Price family, he alleviates his master's fears about taking him with them up to Ohio by saying that he has been to Ohio before but "never liked a free state"; he also takes advantage of his previous lie regarding Eliza:

> It was soon decided that it would be safe to take me with them, and what made it more safe, Eliza was on the boat with us, and Mrs. Price, to try me, asked if I thought as much as ever of Eliza. I told her that Eliza was very dear to me indeed, and that nothing but death should part us. It was the same as if we were married. This had the desired effect. The boat left New Orleans, and proceeded up the river. (60)

Although he presents two more deceptions here, he provides no excuses for them. In light of the fact that with his other schemes he was able to justify his lies, he now, in omitting an explanation, conveys the sense that he feels these falsehoods more justified because his freedom is at stake in whether he can persuade the Prices to travel to a free state with him on board. Focusing on the slaves' stratagems for survival, Charles H. Nichols contends that slave narrators constantly analyze the psychological conflicts which their positions generate and that they achieve moral and psychological renewal by adopting roles demanded by their situations and cleaving fastidiously to the ideals of personal freedom ("Slave" 285). One may see Brown using this survival technique when, in front of the Prices, he assumes the persona of a content and lovesick slave in order to further his plans for escaping from bondage.

But more than simply persuading his master to travel to Ohio with him, he makes a few rhetorical moves here to get away from his position as a slave, both in the scene being narrated and in his narration of it. As he lies about having been to a free state before and not liking it as well as about having an unwavering devotion to Eliza, he disguises his emotions, giving himself space to control his own genuine feelings without their being subject to the interpretation and manipulation of his master. Hiding his emotions, then, becomes a way for him to help regulate his master's response to him. As he narrates this scene, he enlarges the psychological space between himself and his enslaved self by portraying himself as the one who orchestrated all of the events. Because Brown gives his readers an unadorned summary of what he said to the Prices, without recording their responses or letting any other descriptive comments intervene, he effectively squelches their authority and gives himself the final word. At the same time, he makes them appear foolish and weak--as if they would be so gullible as to believe that he, a slave, "never liked a free state." The portrayal is of a discerning, clever individual in control, one which denies his assigned subservience and inverts the master/slave relationship.

As with Jacobs and Craft, Brown takes an interest in using names to pull away from his enslaved self. Whereas they appear to find freedom and protection in putting on

fictitious names--Jacobs using "Linda Brent" in her narration and Craft using "William Johnson" in his escape--Brown creates an emotional space for himself through his strategic narrative placement of a few names. Despite identifying numerous persons by name in the early part of his narrative, Brown, though initially mentioning his master, does not reveal his name, Dr. John Young, until about a quarter of the way into his story. The attitude which underlies his decision not to readily identify his master might, in part, be discerned in his opening description: "I was born in Lexington, Ky. The man who stole me as soon as I was born, recorded the births of all the infants which he claimed to be born his property, in a book which he kept for that purpose" (28). In presenting his narrative, Brown, in essence, rewrites his master's property book and, by temporarily withholding Young's name, visibly demonstrates that his old master has now figuratively become *his* property. His decision not to disclose Young's name might also be based on resentment over Young's denying him the name his mother gave him, for, as Sterling Stuckey asserts, a slave associated a new name from his master with forced submission and powerlessness.

Lending credence to this idea is the fact that just a few pages before Brown reveals his master's name, he tells his readers that when he was around ten or twelve years old, his master changed his first name to give precedence to

their infant nephew, William Moore, who came to live with them.[7] Significantly, Brown does not mention the name his master forced upon him, "Sandford," until near the end of his narrative when he describes his escape from slavery and reveals that, at the time, he thought the name change "one of the most cruel acts that could have been committed" upon his rights, for he also was severely whipped for telling people his name was William (63). The disclosure of how he reacted to the name change sheds greater light on his decision to withhold his master's name for several chapters.[8] This latter maneuver mimics Young's show of authority in regulating Brown's name and identity and relegates him to a parenthetical note. Similarly, that "Sandford" does not appear earlier should not be seen as an oversight. Brown's particular placement of that name in his narrative enables him to refute and set himself apart from his assigned identity and to deflate the power of the Other, dramatically emphasizing the idea that he has escaped from slavery.

Part of what helps Brown and other slave narrators emotionally and psychologically disentangle themselves from slavery is making a connection with their audiences. Although this process sometimes begins, as it does for Jacobs and Craft, with the author's preface imagining certain readers, Brown opts not to use an authorial preface but to include a letter from his editor, Edmund Quincy, and

a preface by J. C. Hathaway.[9] Quincy's letter serves a few important functions: it indicates that Brown offers a different phase of slavery from what Frederick Douglass has portrayed and a range of experiences--having worked in the house, field, and river--that few slaves have had and which no one yet has been competent to describe. It also claims that the only editing Quincy did involved clerical errors and suggestions of "a few curtailments." Creating a sense of trust between Brown and his readers, the letter expresses the idea that this narrative has not been tampered with and that he will be giving them a more complete picture of slavery.

Echoing a few ideas from Quincy's letter, Hathaway implies that Brown knows and will reveal things about slavery that have been veiled to other people and that the simplicity of his descriptions attests to the veracity of these scenes and his experiences. Hathaway's Preface serves much the same purpose that a preface by Brown would have in directly addressing specific segments of the audience--those claiming to be Abolitionists, Christians, friends of the Bible and the missionary cause--and imploring them to give evidence of their affiliations by tangibly supporting the anti-slavery cause. In having Hathaway write the Preface, Brown credibly accounts for how he has spent the last three years since his escape from slavery without appearing prideful.

Although in the narrative Brown does not as forcefully or directly address the readers as Hathaway does in the Preface, he displays a keen awareness of their ideologies and tries to draw near to them emotionally and psychologically by showing that he wants to uphold their values. He uses one such appeal as he describes, in the first chapter, the time when as a young house servant he heard his mother, a field hand, groaning and crying out for mercy as the overseer whipped her for being ten or fifteen minutes late in getting into the field.[10] By describing his inability to go beyond the door and being overcome with chills and weeping, Brown calls the readers' attention to his feelings of frustration and helplessness. By introducing this scene with a comment on how as a house servant he was better fed, better clothed, and allowed to sleep a half hour later than the field hands, he turns this seemingly better position into a negative one so that his readers will not assume that he had an easy life in the Big House. He also gives greater significance to his own experience by carefully wording his commentary to reflect the larger picture of slavery: "Experience has taught me that nothing can be more heart-rending than for one to see a dear and beloved mother or sister tortured, and to hear their cries, and not be able to render them assistance. But such is the position which an American slave occupies" (29). This example serves not just to relate an experience of his

own and of slaves in general but also to exhibit his own character as loving, caring, and sympathetic and to show himself as one who puts a premium on the family. Through the relation of this trauma, Brown aligns himself with his audience by essentially arguing that the slave system renders the slaves' concern for their families worthless, in practical terms, and even detrimental because of the emotional agony the slaves suffer in not being able to protect or give comfort to those they care about.

Later appealing to his audience in a related matter, Brown tells about one of the reasons he did not want to marry anyone until he was free: "I knew that if I should have a wife, I should not be willing to leave her behind; and if I should attempt to bring her with me, the chances would be difficult for success" (59). Brown is letting his readers know that, like them, he takes marriage seriously and would honor the commitment. While he only speaks briefly of his own reason for not marrying, he uses this statement to make more generalized comments about marriage, saying that "there is no such thing as slaves being lawfully married" and that "the man may have as many women as he wishes, and the women as many men; and the law takes no cognizance of such acts among slaves" (59-60). These remarks send the audience the message that slavery encourages polygamy and other practices which directly oppose their own values. With this implied polarization of

ideologies, he tries to repulse his readers away from sympathizing with the slave holders and urge them to stand with him against slavery and such deplorable practices.

Reaching readers closer at home, just as Craft does later, Brown describes how on a trip down to New Orleans, he met a young white boy named Burrill whom he knew from St. Louis and who had been sold into slavery. Trying to help his newly widowed mother provide for his siblings, this young boy, about thirteen years old, took a job doing chores for a store owner named Riley and accompanied him on a "visit" down to New Orleans, only to find himself put in bondage. On returning to St. Louis, Riley told Burrill's mother he had died of yellow fever. Brown notes that he felt sad about this young boy's condition, but as they were both slaves, he could not aid him. Although he ends the narration of this scene without providing any overt commentary, Brown accomplishes a few things here. This example contributes to the idea that slavery tears asunder family bonds and suggests that the debauchery of slave holders and traders has no limits. Brown's choice to end the scene with a stated presumption that this young man is still a slave leaves the readers with an image to ponder, causing them to wonder about Burrill's fate too. More to the point, he prompts them to wonder about the security of their own families as well. By presenting an example of a young white man's being sold into slavery, Brown

demonstrates that slavery poses a threat not to the African-Americans alone but to his readers as well.

In the process of trying to move himself emotionally and psychologically closer to his readers, Brown occasionally becomes more leading in his commentary accompanying the narration of scenes which might otherwise be misinterpreted. As he relates his experience of being hired out to work on one steamboat, he anticipates that some readers might overlook the effects of his bondage in the midst of an outwardly positive condition:

> My employment on board was to wait on gentlemen, and the captain being a good man, the situation was a pleasant one to me;--but in passing from place to place, and seeing new faces every day, and knowing that they could go where they pleased, I soon became unhappy, and several times thought of leaving the boat at some landing-place, and trying to make my escape to Canada, which I had heard much about as a place where the slave might live, be free, and be protected. (35)

That he acknowledges this job as satisfactory gives greater weight to his expressions of dread and disgust over other labors, and that he immediately, even in the same sentence, qualifies the positive with a negative suggests that he thinks his audience may ease up in their sympathy or compassion. Brown necessarily takes this pleasant situation

and casts a shadow on it so that his readers will see that for the slave, even a "good" situation is tainted by his position because it highlights the disparity between bondage and liberty. The narration reveals that his enslavement goes deeper than the legal and physical levels.

Brown's concern with guiding his readers sometimes takes the opposite form, turning what might be perceived as a negative into a positive. One example of this appears near the end of his narrative as he describes his experience of running out of provisions during his escape:

> Have something to eat I must; but how to get it was the question! On the first night after my food was gone, I went to a barn on the road-side and there found some ears of corn. I took ten or twelve of them, and kept on my journey. During the next day, while in the woods, I roasted my corn and feasted upon it, thanking God that I was so well provided for. (63)

Although the action Brown describes might be looked upon as stealing, he anticipates his audience's possible disapproval of this and tempers it by using benign language, giving the impression that the corn belonged to no one and that it was his by finder's rights. He not only manages to avoid pushing his audience away by letting them see him as an Other who steals, but also engineers the description of the scene to pull his readers toward him with the implication

that what he did was more than morally correct--it was blessed, for he was accepting and being grateful for God's provisions. Brown subtly argues that God is on his side and that to criticize his action would be to scoff at or question God's grace.

Giving his audience an incentive to show whose side they are on, Brown indicates that some of the slave holders he has encountered have something in common with many of his readers. He identifies this commonality in a few descriptions of Mr. John Colburn, the Missouri Hotel keeper for whom he worked: "He was from one of the free states; but a more inveterate hater of the negro I do not believe ever walked God's green earth" (32). Brown here can be seen projecting an assumption perhaps many of his readers have, that those who live in or are from the free states would support abolitionism. He summarily destroys that notion, however, and implies that there are supporters of slavery living amidst his audience in the North. For Brown, the fact that Colburn was from the free states seems as important to get across to the readers as the fact that he committed heinous deeds, for he unmistakably reiterates that point at the end of the scene: "If all the slave-drivers had been called together, I do not think a more cruel man than John Colburn--and he too a northern man--could have been found among them" (33). More than simply wanting to destroy his readers' false assumptions through this scene,

Brown desires to move his audience closer to himself emotionally. Knowing that they would not want to align themselves with the Otherness of Colburn, he draws on a feature common to the backgrounds of both so as to appeal to his readers to show that they are different from the slave holders and that these cruel Northerners do not typify the feelings and attitudes of all of those in the free states. This bit of geographical information, then, becomes a means by which to relocate his audience into the position of wanting to support him and the abolitionist movement and distinguish themselves as humane.

Brown demonstrates a desire not only to move closer to his readers but also to separate himself from the slave holders. By exposing the Otherness of his former masters and the rest of the slave holders, he distances himself from them emotionally and psychologically. While Jacobs and Craft vehemently protest their masters' vileness, Brown, for the most part, calmly expresses his scorn and contempt for them. One of the primary ways that he shows the slave holders and traders as wicked is through a description of the physical torture they inflict upon slaves. An example of this appears in the first chapter with the case of the overseer Grove Cook, who became "more tyrannical and cruel" when Brown's master was absent and left him in charge. Brown draws his readers' attention to Cook's belligerence in telling how he had announced that he would flog any slave

who worked under him in the field and how, though the master told him not to attempt to whip Randall, a strong and powerful slave who was "considered the most valuable and able-bodied slave on the plantation" (29), he was determined to do it and so began finding fault with him. Despite Randall's attempts to reason with him, Cook, with three of his friends, ordered him to go with them to the barn. When Randall refused, one of the men shot him to the ground, and the others rushed upon him with clubs, beat his face and head, and then tied him up in the barn, whereupon Cook gave one hundred lashes, had him washed with brine, and bound him with a ball and chain.

In narrating this scene, Brown guides his readers to sympathize with Randall by showing him as industrious and reasonable; at the same time readers are to object to Cook's unreasonableness and barbarism. Providing commentary on the larger picture of slavery, this example suggests that working hard and minding one's own business afford the slave no protection against the lash. With attention to how Cook incited this confrontation with Randall, Brown essentially argues that the master's or overseer's use of the lash and other physical torments reflects an inner corruption. One may see Brown trying to eliminate his readers' hesitations about viewing Randall as a victim by anticipating how they might misread the scene and unconsciously make allowances for Cook's behavior. He discounts the idea that Randall was

lazy by describing him as "the most valuable and able-bodied slave," who had been given "a very hard task--more than he could possibly do" (29-30). Though Cook told Randall he was going to whip him "because he had not finished his task the day before" (30), Brown hints at the unpersuasiveness of that reason by showing that if Cook wanted him to work harder, the punishment was too debilitating to accomplishing that end. Similarly, if Cook simply wanted to control him physically, the gun shot that brought Randall to the ground was enough to subdue him. Lest his readers think that Randall's master would reprove Cook's actions, Brown concludes the scene with the comment that he was "much pleased to find that Randall had been subdued in his absence" (30), implying that he just did not want to "dirty" his own hands. Through such excessive actions, Brown encourages his audience to conclude that slave holders often want not only to dominate their slaves physically but also break their spirits.

Further emphasizing his point that the Others are malicious to the bone, Brown tells of the suffering endured by a slave named Aaron at the hand of his employer, John Colburn, whom he describes as "very abusive, not only to the servants, but to his wife also, who was an excellent woman" (32). In his narration of the scene, Brown calls his readers' attention not to the deed but to the fiery wrath which followed it: "One day, one of the knives was put on

the table, not as clean as it might have been. Mr. Colburn, for this offence, tied Aaron up in the wood-house, and gave him over fifty lashes on the bareback with a cow-hide, after which, he made me wash him down with rum" (32). Later learning that Aaron had complained to his master about this treatment, though to no avail, Colburn tied him up again and whipped him so severely that he was not able to work for ten to twelve days. Although Mrs. Colburn has no part in this incident, Brown's reference to her as an "excellent woman" is noteworthy because it accomplishes a few important things. By characterizing her in this way, Brown psychologically distances himself from the Other, for he himself recognizes her worth, whereas Colburn not only disregards her excellence but also abuses it. This juxtaposition of wife and husband highlights Colburn as inhumane and prepares the reader to view him as implacable in the case of Aaron. Brown's use of passive voice to describe the initial deed also diverts attention away from Aaron's culpability and toward the Otherness of Colburn, who victimizes him. While the occupation of Aaron's master may seem immaterial, in identifying him as a lawyer Brown implicitly argues that slaves have no protection or recourse under the law. Moreover, the examples of Randall and Aaron illustrate the idea that the Others work in collusion against the slaves. Brown wants his readers to see that slavery feeds the slave holders' craving for violence, and

that unless they support abolitionism, they are in effect condoning this depraved mentality.

Zeroing in on a subject which his imagined audience holds dear, Brown shows that slave holders have manipulated religion for their own ends. One such case involves a "gentleman" named D. D. Page, whom Brown saw one Sabbath running around his yard with a long whip, cutting a slave in an attempt to capture or punish him. When the slave realized he would soon be caught, he stopped abruptly, and Page tripped over him and fractured his own leg, leaving him crippled for life. Immediately after Brown tells of Page's crippling accident, he briefly describes another incident, which guides the readers' reactions to the first scene:

> The same gentleman, but a short time previous, tied up a woman of his, by the name of Delphia, and whipped her nearly to death; yet he was a deacon in the Baptist church, in good and regular standing. Poor Delphia! I was well acquainted with her, and called to see her while upon her sick bed; and I shall never forget her appearance. She was a member of the same church with her master. (38)

Although Brown, as usual, chooses not to make an overt evaluation of this scene, he does provide some indirect commentary. By identifying this day as the Sabbath, he directs his readers toward the disparity between Page's act

of cutting the slave and godliness, calling to mind the persecution of Christ, the Innocent, who suffered the lash. Without specifying a wrong that the slave may have committed, Brown presents him as guiltless too, and, conversely, Page appears all the more evil. That Brown does not want the readers to sympathize with Page's handicap becomes apparent by how quickly he follows up this scene with a picture of his heinous treatment of Delphia. Sandwiched between the descriptions of Page's cruelty and Brown's relationship to Delphia is a comment about Page's position within the Baptist church, which, in its narrative interruption, rhetorically mimics the disturbing nature of his hypocrisy. Just as the clause itself seems unrelated to the sentences preceding and following it, the fact of Page's being a deacon and in "good and regular standing" has no apparent influence or connection with how he thinks of and treats his slaves. His "religion" did not benefit the pursued slave or Delphia. In articulating the incompatibility between Page nearly whipping a slave to death and maintaining a good standing in church, Brown moves away from the Other psychologically and shows himself to the readers as either more spiritually perceptive or more humane than Page. This episode about Page has the potential for two different readings, each one making an argument that would unsettle the audience and urge them to action. If Page's church is aware of his treatment of the slaves, his

good standing indicates that they tolerate this cruelty. If, however, his church does not know about these abuses, his good standing is a general warning to the readers that, because there may not be any readily discernible signs of the Others' depraved characters, they might be hidden within their own churches.

To illuminate another aspect of this distortion, Brown shows his readers that the religious hypocrisy of the Others not only enables them to excuse their physical abuse of the slaves but also allows them to buy and sell humans with an ease of conscience. Narrating the foiled escape attempt with his mother, Brown describes being apprehended for a two hundred dollar reward and then taken to the home of the lead bounty hunter:

> Before the family retired to rest, they were all called together to attend prayers. The man who but a few hours before had bound my hands together with a strong cord, read a chapter from the Bible, and then offered up prayer, just as though God had sanctioned the act he had just committed upon a poor, panting, fugitive slave. (53)

Although this man is the one with the Bible, Brown spiritually and emotionally distances himself from him and reveals his Otherness by pointing to the discordant relationship between his hunting down a slave and his reading the Bible and praying to God. Subtle as it is,

Brown's repudiation of this man's "religion," or rather, sanctimoniousness, can be seen in the last clause of his description, in which he denies the idea that God would condone slavery and also portrays the man as so merciless and mercenary as to take advantage of his obviously desperate plight. By emphasizing this man's lack of compassion, Brown implicitly argues that the religion of the Others is one of form, not substance, that it affects the exterior, not the interior. Presenting himself as a helpless victim in this scene, Brown rhetorically mirrors the situation for his readers and gives them an opportunity to prove themselves and their religion as more sincere and genuine than this man's by supporting abolitionism.

Contending that slavery undermines his and his readers' values, Brown, as with Harriet Jacobs and William Craft, cites numerous cases of how it has torn families apart for the sake of profit or convenience. He gives the example of Solomon, a chained and manacled man whom he encountered while working on a steamboat: "He was a preacher, and belonged to the same church as his master. I was glad to see the old man. He wept like a child when he told me how he had been sold from his wife and children" (56). The description of Solomon's reaction makes the point that slaves do feel the loss of their family members as keenly as the rest of society would. Because the imagined readers consider themselves Christians, the inclusion of this

scene's religious background is also significant for it enables Brown to emphasize the idea that Solomon and his master are spiritually polarized, the former being aligned with the fruit of the Spirit, showing love and gentleness, and the latter being associated with the works of the flesh, propagating enmity and dissension.[11] Brown wants his readers to see that slave holders are so demoralized that they measure the value of the family unit in terms of dollars.

Brown bases his portrayal of the slave holders' practice of separating families not on observation alone, but, like Jacobs and Craft, upon his personal experience as well. His approach differs from theirs, however, in that he holds his emotions in reserve. In narrating the farewell visit he has with his sister before her new master takes her away, he prepares his readers for viewing his representation of the event as less poignant than its reality: "I cannot give a just description of the scene at that parting interview. Never, never can be erased from my heart the occurrences of that day!" (50). Though he proceeds to give his readers a moving account of his sister's reaction to being forced to part with her family, he says nothing directly of his own response. This rhetorical evasiveness may be for strictly personal reasons, or, as Raymond Hedin suggests was the case for many slave narrators, it may be to assure his readers that he could hold himself under

control.[12] In Brown's opening comments, he basically excuses himself from sharing his emotions but, at the same time, communicates the sense that he was affected deeply. Through these initial statements, he creates a space of protection for himself. Without divulging his innermost thoughts and feelings about the severance of his family and making himself more vulnerable, he takes precautions to ensure that his readers do not see him as unfeeling. At the same time that he fosters a relationship with readers by showing that he, too, holds the family unit dear, he emotionally distances himself from the Others by evading an acknowledgment of their control over his life. He necessarily raises this example and similar cases, however, to hold the Others figuratively accountable for the devastation they have wreaked on both individuals and families.

Brown implicitly encourages his readers to see the Otherness of slavery as an epidemic of evil. When he narrates the time he ran away from his abusive employer Major Freeland, an "inveterate drunkard," he describes being caught and then tied up in the smoke-house and severely whipped by him. Freeland then had his son Robert, whom Brown calls "a chip off the old block," give him a smoking from a fire of tobacco leaves, causing him to go into coughing and sneezing fits. Significantly, Brown notes that Robert told him that this is what his father used to do to

his slaves in Virginia. Through this comment and his epithet for Robert, Brown gives his readers the sense that this Otherness is being passed down from one generation to the next, just as slavery is a status transmitted by inheritance. The inclusion of the claim that Major Freeland has used this torture on other slaves, not just there in Missouri but also in Virginia, is noteworthy because it suggests the pervasiveness of this wickedness. Contributing to the idea that slaveholding nourishes a diseased nature are Brown's numerous examples of the Others' not only committing vile acts upon the slaves but also forcing them to join them in their wicked deeds. For instance, Brown tells of being hired out to the soul-driver Mr. Walker and being ordered to prepare the old slaves for market by plucking out their gray hairs when not too many and otherwise applying blacking to their heads:

> These slaves were also taught how old they were by Mr. Walker, and after going through the blacking process they looked ten or fifteen years younger; and I am sure that some of those who purchased slaves of Mr. Walker were dreadfully cheated, especially in the ages of the slaves which they bought. (40)

In addition to revealing to his readers how deceptive the slave holders and traders are, Brown accomplishes a few additional noteworthy things. By specifically telling his

audience that he was ordered to perform these deeds and that he feels the buyers were defrauded, he clears himself of blame and distinguishes himself from the Others psychologically and morally. Through his description of this scene, Brown directs his readers to see the depravity of the slave holders and traders as a contagion which is not just confined to themselves but threatens to infect the slaves as well. While the readers might not be particularly disturbed at the idea that the traders and masters swindle each other, through this point Brown argues that the social ill of slavery results not simply from its legalization but also from a contaminated mentality, which does not even abide by the law.

Further highlighting the moral turpitude of the slave holders, Brown, as with Jacobs and Craft, brings to light cases in which slaves have been compelled to participate in their debauchery, with threats and acts of violence if they refuse. He describes the situation of a beautiful quadroon slave named Cynthia who, though bearing an "irreproachable character for virtue and propriety of conduct" (42), was subjected to "base offers" by her master Mr. Walker. Despite being told that if she did accept his "vile proposals," he would make her his housekeeper and if she did not, he would sell her as a field hand to the worst plantation, Cynthia rejected them and, after being raped and made to bear four children by him, was sold into "hopeless

bondage" to make room for his new wife.[13] As usual, Brown provides no overt evaluation of this scene but rather leaves his commentary implicit in the description.[14] In addition to showing the lasciviousness of some slave holders, this example serves to emphasize the idea that slavery tolerates and makes allowances for the iniquity of the masters but discourages the slaves from embracing righteousness and often prevents them from practicing certain virtues. Knowing that his readers consider themselves Christians and would want to reinforce moral excellence, Brown here tries to draw them toward him by demonstrating an appreciation for those same values--having indicated that he "comforted and encouraged" Cynthia before her master carried out his threats--and by raising their ire against the Others, who sabotage their ideologies. At the same time he shows himself in sympathy with his audience's values, he widens the moral and psychological distance between himself and the slave masters.

While he suggests that the Others, such as Cynthia's master, think they can sell away the consequences of their sinfulness or commit heinous deeds with impunity, in writing his narrative Brown prevents that from happening, figuratively holding them up for contempt and making them stand accountable. Through the process of distancing himself from them emotionally, morally, and psychologically, he enables himself to gain control over his history and deny

his slave status. Writing his story becomes a way of marking out a psychological terrain of freedom. Whereas in slavery, his masters and employers dictated the parameters of his movements, in his narrative, he displaces them from their position of power and puts boundaries around them by exhibiting them as Others.

Narrative Structure of Romance

Brown, like Jacobs and Craft, uses his narrative's structure to establish and reinforce the idea that he is an independent agent. Casting his history in the mode of Romance, he allows his audience to view him as one who has terminated his bondage. His approach resembles Craft's in that they both incorporate numerous digressions, but Brown's structure presents more of a challenge for readers to follow because it is looser, tending more toward the picaresque and not having the same strong unifying element of a journey. Brown records his physical flight to freedom, but not as an extensive theme which spans from the beginning of his narrative to the end, as it does in Craft's story, but rather as the topic of his final chapter.[15]

In representing their origins, Jacobs, Craft, and Brown write similar introductory comments, indicating that they were born into slavery and that their families have been torn apart by their masters. Unlike Craft, who immediately gives his wife's background and digresses into different

slave cases, Jacobs and Brown begin by sharing their own childhood memories. Whereas Jacobs speaks of her first six years of life as happy because of her naivete regarding her slave status, Brown never tells of a time when he did not know he was a slave. He gives his readers a sense of what his childhood was like in recording the time when he awoke from bed to hear his mother, a field hand who had been a little late in getting to work, cry out for mercy as the overseer whipped her. By beginning his story with this scene, which has him waking up to the crack of the whip and his mother's cries, he conveys the idea that this was his initiation into the world of slavery. Describing how he was affected with chills and weeping but dared not move, Brown directs his audience to his feelings of helplessness as a young slave. This emotion or its antithesis becomes the thread which he weaves through many of the scenes involving himself in order to prepare his readers to see him eventually as triumphant over his subservient position.

The next self-portrait presents Brown working for the abusive Major Freeland and complaining to his master about the treatment he has received from his employer. Not finding any help, he eventually runs away from Freeland. Though Brown shows himself here as no longer simply immobilized by fear, he makes ineffectual attempts to help himself, for instead of trying to escape from slavery, he runs away to his master's farm, but notes that he "was

afraid to be seen" (31). At this point in his narrative, Brown is still enmeshed in his world of experience as a slave. Not until he works on a steamboat and sees new faces everyday does he begin thinking about escaping from slavery. This change in perspective is notable because it is after this point that he shows himself reacting to his position as a slave and going on the defensive. An example of this appears in the scene in which Mr. Walker, his employer, sends him with a note to the jailer. Finding out that the note is an order to have him whipped, Brown devises a plan to avoid the flogging and convince Walker he has received it. This scheme represents a step toward his transcendence of his subjugated status.

The next important stage in Brown's psychological development takes form after his farewell visit to his sister in jail. Going on the offensive, he decides to leave for Canada as soon as he can, but his escape attempt with his mother fails. The crisis of his life comes in watching his mother sold down to New Orleans and in finally determining to lay plans for his escape from slavery. In describing his state of mind at the time, he reveals a firmer resolve and stronger impetus than what he had before his initial escape attempt: "The anxiety to be a freeman would not let me rest day or night. . . . I would dream at night that I was in Canada, a freeman, and on waking in the morning, weep to find myself so sadly mistaken" (58). This

metamorphic outlook enables him to gather the courage to transcend his slave status by escaping into some woods when his new master and fellow passengers are unloading a cargo boat they have just taken up to Ohio. Brown may be seen as emphasizing the idea that he is about to transcend the world of experience when, before he narrates his escape, he describes his last night in slavery: "When not thinking of the future, my mind dwelt on the past. The love of a dear mother, a dear sister, and three dear brothers, yet living, caused me to shed many tears. If I could only have been assured of their being dead, I should have felt satisfied" (61-62). Although in escaping from slavery, he has left behind family and all familiarities, he has not yet realized the freedom he is looking for.

One may discern Brown articulating a new vision of himself in the scene in which a Quaker family welcomes him into their home. Because the Quakers treat him with dignity and respect--recognizing his humanity--they become a means through which he moves on to another stage of Romance. He attains his victory over the world of experience not just in refusing to think of himself as a slave but also in thinking of himself as a free man. Expressing the thrill of his newly found identity, he writes, "I wanted to see Captain Price, and let him learn from my own lips that I was no more a chattel, but a man!" (65). This comment gives evidence that Brown has traveled not only physical miles but also

mental miles, being ready to stand toe to toe with his oppressor and stare him down.

Brown shows his identity as a free man becoming stronger when he shortly thereafter takes a job on board a lake steamboat. Although his original goal had been to reach Canada and live there, he finds fulfillment in helping other slaves procure their freedom. Brown appears to achieve a liberation from his world of experience as a slave through his efforts in conveying fugitives to Canada without charge, for the fact that he could assist other slaves in this way suggests that he feels he has already secured his own freedom.

Unlike Jacobs and Craft, Brown presents himself as fairly comfortable in traveling about the North without fear. Writing his narrative in 1847, he does not face the same kinds of threats to this freedom and livelihood as Jacobs and Craft do later in living in the Free States after the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. On the other hand, by the time they write their accounts, they sit in relatively safer positions than Brown's: Jacobs already has her free papers, and Craft lives in England. As Brown emplots his history as Romance, he modifies the structure to reflect his discomfort, though perhaps not as much as Jacobs and Craft do. Rather than portraying himself as realizing a final liberation, which could detract from his appeals to his audience, he reminds his readers that he is still a slave

and that millions of other American "citizens" are in chains. Although this is probably Brown's most ardent statement in his whole narrative, it represents the legal perspective, not his own, for he has already by this point in his story declared himself a free man. In pointing out that he is still legally considered a slave, he speaks for more than himself because it applies to all bound slaves and fugitives. Brown necessarily modifies the Romance structure of his narrative in order to emphasize not only the fact that he has not yet achieved absolute freedom but also the idea that the abolitionist movement needs support, for the sake of the slaves and the integrity of the nation.

The advantage Brown has in emplotting his history as a Romance is that it enables him to present himself as triumphant over his slave status and the Others. Through the various represented events in his life, he shows himself moving from a state of utter helplessness to one of defense. After he demonstrates that he has successfully blocked some of his masters' and employers' exploitative acts and malefactions, he displays himself taking a position of offense, not just for himself in escaping from slavery but for other fugitives in transporting them to Canada. Writing his narrative also may be seen as part of the latter stage of Romance because, in addition to helping him chart his progress toward self-identification and liberation, it

enables him figuratively to subvert the power of slave holders and claim authority over his own history.

Heteroglossia of Authenticating Documents

Compared with the accounts of Harriet Jacobs and William Craft, William Wells Brown's narrative contains relatively little overt heteroglossia. Nevertheless, Brown still appears to find it useful to present not only the larger picture of slavery but also his own personal history. Like Jacobs and Craft, he deflates the language of the Other by incorporating into his story several different kinds of voices and genres which reflect the various social, ideological, and historical conditions which shape the meaning of a word uttered in that place and at that moment. With his numerous digressions and represented dialogues, he gives his readers the impression that it is not just his voice speaking, that he does not stand alone in accusing the slave holders. In addition to these manifestations of heteroglossia, Brown utilizes such things as a slave song, a newspaper extract, poems, literary references, and word play to delineate further the slave masters and traders as Others and to enlarge the emotional and psychological space between himself and them.

Brown occasionally makes use of heteroglossia to supply commentary on disturbing scenes that he describes. One example involves a slave song he quotes after telling of how

on a slave drive Walker, his employer, gave a woman's baby away because he would not stop crying. The first two of the song's four stanzas seem to speak to the woman's trauma and point her heavenward:

> See these poor souls from Africa
> Transported to America;
> We are stolen, and sold to Georgia--
> Will you go along with me?
> We are stolen, and sold to Georgia--
> Come sound the jubilee!
>
> See wives and husbands sold apart,
> Their children's screams will break my heart;--
> There's a better day a coming--
> Will you go along with me?
> There's a better day a coming,
> Go sound the jubilee! (44)

In the final two stanzas, the speaker addresses God and pleads with Him to "break them slavery powers" (44). Because in the preceding scene Brown shows the woman pleading with Walker to let her keep her baby to no avail, the placement of this song allows the words to take on a personalized meaning, suggesting that it is part of the dialogue. Although at the time, Walker had the last word, Brown figuratively recoups that situation and, through the song, enables the woman, in a sense, to talk back to him and

charge him with stealing African-Americans and destroying her family and those of other slaves. In relation to Brown's narrative as a whole, this song helps him emphasize the idea that African-Americans are a displaced people. The refrain "there's a better day a coming" also serves to deflate the Other's authority and figure the Lord as the ultimate Master.

With the ostensible purpose of showing his readers that he has not misrepresented a slave driver such as Walker, Brown quotes an extract from a paper published in the slave-holding state of Tennessee, called the Millennial Trumpeter:

> 'Who is a negro-driver? One whose eyes dwell with delight on lacerated bodies of helpless men, women and children; whose soul feels diabolical raptures at the chains, and hand-cuffs, and cart-whips, for inflicting tortures on weeping mothers torn from helpless babes, and on husbands and wives torn asunder forever!' (57)

Highlighting the heteroglot nature of language, Brown then uses this very article--which lends credence to his depiction of Walker and slave drivers in general--to question the underlying premise of this perspective. Although he agrees with this description of a slave driver, he shows concern that it reflects a smugness that is potentially as dangerous as the slave driver's villainy:

> But though these men may cant about negro-drivers, and tell what despicable creatures they are, who is it, I ask, that supplies them with the human beings that they are tearing asunder? I answer, as far as I have any knowledge of the state where I came from, that those who raise slaves for the market are to be found among all classes, from Thomas H. Benton down to the lowest political demogogue [sic] who may be able to purchase a woman for the purpose of raising stock, and from the doctor of divinity down to the most humble lay member of the church. (57)

The newspaper extract itself serves to bolster Brown's narrative authority by substantiating his experiences and observations and to remind his readers that in speaking of a slave driver, he not only refers to a specific individual in his own personal history but also reflects a class of Others in "the story of slavery." In taking the writer to task for his misdirected attention, however, Brown distinguishes his position of authority more clearly and confirms his own sense of identity, showing himself as perceptive and independent. If the writer were from the North and was describing slave drivers he had encountered, Brown probably would not object to this same picture, but because he knows that the writer is from a slave-holding state, and thus familiar with the workings of the slave system, this article

elicits a different reaction from him. The inclusion of the extract enriches his narrative because it helps him address an assumption many of his readers might have--that the problem is over yonder somewhere, not in their midst--and direct his audience to see the culpability of the seemingly respectable and humble individuals who participate in the denigration and abuse of African-Americans either through enslavement or their toleration of it.

In a few places in his narrative, Brown overtly implements heteroglossia in the form of word play. One instance of this appears in the scene in which his first owner, Dr. Young, tells him that he needs to sell him but will allow Brown to find a new owner:

> 'You may go to the city, and find you a good master.'
>
> 'But,' said I, 'I cannot find a good master in the whole city of St. Louis.'
>
> 'Why?' said he.
>
> 'Because there are no good masters in the state.'
>
> 'Do you not call me a good master?'
>
> 'If you were you would not sell me.'
>
> 'Now I will give you one week to find a master in, and surely you can do it in that time.' (49-50)

Although this scene shows Young assuming that he holds the power in this situation and that he is in control of the conversation, Brown subtly challenges the authority of his language. When Young introduces the word "master" to the conversation, Brown de-centers the language of the Other by questioning and complicating *the* meaning which Young would ascribe to it. In his responses to Young, Brown insists that he recognize the existence of meanings and associations of that word outside of a slave holder's perspective. William L. Andrews rightly identifies this conversation as a "verbal sparring match" in which Brown "dialogizes" the word "master" to confuse the relationship between himself and *his* master ("Dialogue" 92). In addition to showing Brown protesting his position at that time, the presentation of this dialogue allows him to open up the conversation to public scrutiny and interpretation and to widen its socio-ideological context. This scene, then, enables him to reconfigure the power structure of his relationship with Young and create a psychological space between himself and his former master.

These explicit representations of heteroglossia in Brown's narrative act as rallying points for him and for those still in bondage. Although during his enslavement, he was frequently prompted or forcibly made to recognize the voice of his masters as supreme in authority, Brown now refutes their position of ascendancy by figuratively

reclaiming his history and by sanctioning a multiplicity of voices which castigate them as Others. With heteroglot language, he implicitly argues that the meaning of any utterance, whether by slave or master, is conditioned by numerous social, ideological, and historical influences and forces converging and colliding at that moment and that place. He, thus, emphasizes the idea that the language of the masters not only should not but cannot be considered sacrosanct, and thereby psychologically distances himself from the power of the Others.

Levels of Freedom Imagined and Realized

In the Preface to William Wells Brown's narrative, J. C. Hathaway tells the readers that Brown has "been behind the curtain" of slavery and has "visited its secret chambers" (25). Such a claim inevitably raises questions about what secret chambers he has entered and where he now stands in relation to that prison-house. Some answers to these queries may be found in an exploration of how he has been enslaved and how he has envisioned freedom. Like Jacobs and Craft, Brown has been bound on a few different levels, but his representation of the kind of freedom he attains is, in some ways, less complicated than theirs because he writes his account before the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

From the outset of his narrative, Brown reveals that his bondage has extended beyond the physical level. In the scene in which he hears his mother being whipped, his emotional enslavement overwhelms him to the extent that he momentarily becomes physically incapacitated. He shows himself some years later working for Captain Otis Reynolds on a steamboat with his outlook being affected by his slave status. Though he initially finds the work situation pleasant, he soon becomes unhappy because he sees the disparity between his position and those who can go where they please. This scene marks his earliest representation of freedom, for he describes how he thought of leaving "the land of slavery" and escaping to Canada, having heard of it as a "place where the slave might live, be free, and be protected" (35). Notably, at this point he conceives of freedom only in physical terms.

During his years of bondage, Brown manages a few times to create opportunities that allow him some moments of emotional freedom. While he does not as a slave or narrator explicitly recognize it as such, he may be seen as emotionally extricating himself from his position as a slave and experiencing a brief liberation from the Others through his scheme in which he dupes an African-American into taking his whipping for him at the jail. The scheme serves as a disguise for him. Putting up a false front gives him room

to place his feelings beyond the reach of his oppressor and enables him to undermine the control of the Other.

Wanting his readers to see that his enslavement is more than physical and legal, Brown, as narrator, attributes questionable actions to slavery. After describing how he has tricked the free African-American and Walker, he says that "this incident shows how it is that slavery makes its victims lying and mean" (47). In an attempt to substantiate this assertion, he indicates that he would not now try to justify these actions. While in this scene he suggests that slavery no longer undermines his conscience, but one should note that these words do not reflect the perspective of his narrated self but rather his narrating self. In providing this commentary, however, he effects a distance between his enslaved self and his narrating self and provides himself with a greater measure of emotional freedom.

That Brown's enslaved self has not yet developed such a complex view of slavery's penetrating power can be seen in his response to Young's decision to sell him. Brown's narrating self notes, "I tried to enter into some arrangement by which I might purchase my freedom" (50). His idea that his freedom can be obtained with money carries with it the implication that slavery is simply a physical and legal matter. It is this very outlook which propels Brown and his mother to attempt an escape from slavery. In the description of their escape, however, Brown as narrator

reveals a keener perception of their situation than his enslaved self is aware of, that they are not only physically but emotionally enslaved. The vision of freedom his enslaved self expresses, though, primarily concerns bodily removing themselves from America, procuring certain tangibles, and buying his family:

> But with all this depression of heart, the thought that I should one day be free, and call my body my own, buoyed me up, and made my heart leap for joy. I had just been telling my mother how I should try to get employment as soon as we reached Canada, and how I intended to purchase us a little farm, and how I would earn money enough to buy sister and brothers, and how happy we would be in our FREE HOME. (53)

Brown's description indicates he believes that with freedom, he will be able to control his own body and have it legally recognized as belonging to him and that he will have opportunities in Canada to succeed financially. This picture of freedom implicitly points back to his view of slavery. Three factors appear to stand out to him about his bondage: the law does not acknowledge him as the rightful owner of his body; he has been forcibly separated from his family; he does not have a home he can call his own. One should see that it is because he, as a slave, has been interpreting his bondage on a simplistic, material level

that he at this point thinks of his freedom according to external contingencies.

After Brown and his mother are apprehended and he sees her "sold down river," his desire to go to Canada wanes. Revealing his emotional enslavement, he comments, "The love of liberty that had been burning in my bosom had well-nigh gone out. I felt as though I was ready to die" (56). This remark is important because it communicates his state of mind as a slave, and it allows the readers to see him as profoundly affected by his mother's fate. Without such a comment, he perhaps would seem inhumane and calloused--as one of the Others--but with it, he prepares his readers for the episode in which, while working for the Prices, he again lays plans for making his escape from slavery. This period of time marks a crucial advancement in his progress toward liberation. When he evades Mrs. Price's trap to make him content with his new home by determining "never to marry any woman on earth" until he should get his liberty, Brown shows himself beginning to consider his situation in a new light. Instead of thinking of himself just in relation to slavery, he starts to think of himself in relation to freedom. He now responds to his present circumstances and other persons' words and actions according to how they might affect or effect an opportunity for gaining his liberty. Despite still being enslaved physically, he affords himself some emotional freedom in so gauging his verbal replies and

deportment inasmuch as he makes his feelings and desires inaccessible to the Other.

Brown achieves his physical liberty after leaving the Prices' boat when they land in Ohio to unload cargo. One may discern the evolution of his conception of freedom in the significance that he, as a slave, places on the date of his escape: "I had looked forward to New Year's day as the commencement of a new era in the history of my life. I had decided upon leaving the peculiar institution that day" (61). This decision suggests that he no longer confines his possibilities of freedom to the physical realm. Although he bodily escapes from the control of Price, he does not immediately experience any kind of freedom fully. During the first four days of his flight, he still shows signs of being to some degree emotionally and physically enslaved in that he needs to travel by night and is haunted by the thought that he might be carried back into slavery.

The process of Brown's emotional release from slavery accelerates when he realizes that his "escape to a land of freedom" appears certain (63). Thinking of the prospects for his future, he wonders what his name should be. Through the narration of his name change, Brown indicates that he has emotionally distanced himself from the Other: "But as soon as the subject came to my mind, I resolved on adopting my old name of William, and let Sandford go by the board, for I always hated it. Not because there was anything

peculiar in the name; but because it had been forced upon me" (63). In taking back what his first master stole from him, he steps forward toward emotional freedom and prepares the way for his new identity. Expressing the relative significance that he, as a slave, puts on his name, Brown comments, "So I was not only hunting for my liberty, but also hunting for a name; though I regarded the latter as of little consequence, if I could but gain the former" (64). This clarification of his attitude toward his name serves as a crucial element in the interpretation of the subsequent episode, in which he describes how an old Quaker family welcomed him into their home.

The Quakers become the means through which Brown experiences an emotional freedom. Because they selflessly treat him with kindness and dignity and recognize him as a man, he realizes that he is "in all probability a freeman" (65). In the reaction his narrated self has upon finding himself regarded as a man by a white family, one may see that his feelings are no longer dictated by the Others:

> I wanted to see mother and sister, that I might tell them 'I was free!' I wanted to see my fellow-slaves in St. Louis, and let them know that the chains were no longer upon my limbs. I wanted to see Captain Price, and let him learn from my own lips that I was no more a chattel, but a man! (65)

While Brown's exuberance over his present condition indicates that his emotions are no longer enslaved, he has not yet experienced psychological freedom, for he comments that the fact that he could "walk, talk, eat and sleep, as a man," with no one standing over him with "the blood-clotted cow-hide," caused him to feel that he was not himself (66). He does not show a full cognitive acceptance of his status until a few weeks later, when upon leaving the Quaker family, he adopts a new name for himself. Being told by a Quaker gentleman that once he has left slavery he needs another name because "men always have two names," (66), he gives the Quaker the privilege of naming him. When this man wants to name him Wells Brown after himself, the former slave says that he is not willing to lose his name of William upon any terms and so takes William Wells Brown as his new name. In light of his earlier remark about hunting for liberty and hunting for a name, his acceptance of a new name attests to the idea that he now has his psychological freedom. Allowing Wells Brown to name him suggests that he has developed a new sense of self and has become comfortable in his identity as a free man.

As with Harriet Jacobs and William Craft, the kind of freedom that Brown actually realizes differs greatly from that which he had imagined earlier. Rather than going to Canada to live, he takes a job on a Lake Erie steamboat and makes arrangements to carry fugitive slaves to Canada to

"effect their escape to the 'promised land'" (68). He appears more reconciled to his felt freedom than Jacobs and Craft do, for he notes, "It was my great desire, being out of slavery myself, to do what I could for the emancipation of my brethren yet in chains, and while on Lake Erie, I found many opportunities of 'helping their cause along'" (68). Although he claims to be out of slavery, that view reflects his own stabilized sense of self, not his legal status. Just as Jacobs and Craft do not speak of themselves as satisfied with their current circumstances, Brown shows his readers how close he sits to the prison-door of slavery:

> While the people of the United States boast of their freedom, they at the same time keep three millions of their own citizens in chains; and while I am seated here in sight of Bunker Hill Monument, writing this narrative, I am a slave, and no law, not even in Massachusetts, can protect me from the hands of the slave-holder! (66)

With piercing irony, Brown stresses the point that though his present location and his act of writing might signify his freedom on one level, he remains enslaved on another. He also emphasizes the idea that the power of the Other not only binds slaves in the South but also threatens the domain of his readers. In placing this section roughly two pages before the narrative's ending, Brown ensures that while in his concluding pages he speaks of his being "out of slavery"

and helping other slaves escape, his readers will bear in mind that he and millions of slaves still sit either in the prison-house or under legal tyranny. In addition to being an indictment against America, this passage, then, functions as a call to action, imploring aid from his readers through a show of good faith in their concern.

One may observe Brown's liminality as a fugitive slave figured in his job on the Lake Erie steamboat. Just as his own condition is that of being in between a slave and a free man, he transports many of his "brethren" from America to Canada. In helping the fugitives effect their escape, he subverts the authority of the Others and flaunts his liberty, thus confirming his own identity as a free man. In contrast to Jacobs and Craft, Brown presents his new sense of freedom as remaining constant through the end of his narrative. Although he too is a fugitive slave, he publishes his narrative in 1847, thirteen years after his escape and three years before the new Fugitive Slave Law, and, consequently, does not face the same dangers as Jacobs and Craft do and so does not show himself losing ground on the liberty he has gained.[16]

Despite Brown's legal status at the end of his account, the Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself is in many ways a declaration of his freedom. The fact that when he took the steamboat job he bought some books and "at leisure moments perused them with considerable

advantage" (68) to himself tangibly demonstrates his removal from slavery; in telling his readers about it, he also psychologically distances himself from his oppressors. Rather than mentioning personal deficiencies resulting from bondage as Jacobs and Craft do in their conclusions, Brown emphasizes the individual and social progress he has made since leaving slavery, describing his involvement in the anti-slavery movement and the temperance reformation among the African-Americans in Buffalo, both of which were expressions of freedom.[17] More than simply accounting for his time so that his audience will see his perseverance, self-improvement, and compassion, he confirms his own identity as a free man and challenges his readers to link action to ideologies and become champions of abolitionism.

Just as Harriet Jacobs and William Craft make contributions to the slave narrative genre which are particular to the time period in which they write their narratives, so too does William Wells Brown. Along with offering both his own journey toward freedom and the larger story of slavery, Brown's account reflects the relatively less complicated route to freedom that was possible for slaves before the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Although he and the rest of the fugitive slaves in America prior to this year faced numerous obstacles and risked torture and death in their escape, the slave holders' *legal* recourse for their recapture was basically restricted in the free states to

federal warrants. Because of this fact, the freedom Brown represents himself as attaining when he reaches the North is not as elusive as it is for Jacobs and Craft. Regardless of this difference, however, all three narrators demonstrate that they have been enslaved and freed on multiple levels.

NOTES

[1] For an account of the relationship between Brown and the Crafts, see Starling.

[2] Edward M. Coleman offers a biographical sketch on Brown and, from a historical perspective, provides a useful, though brief, analysis of each of his writings.

[3] Starling notes that Brown had sent his third owner, Captain Price, a copy of his narrative when it was first published. Price then wrote a letter back to the editor, Edmund Quincy, declaring, "Now I see many things in his book that are not true, and a part of it as near true as a man could recollect after so long a time" (138). Brown included this letter in his fourth edition and, in a note to the reader, points out that he only lived with Price three months, which only took up a few pages in his narrative, so he would not expect that Price would know anything about the truth of his history except in regard to that part dealing with himself (138).

[4] Reverend Ephraim Peabody finds fault with the narratives of the Clarkes, William Wells Brown, Pennington, and Douglass because he believes they portray the Slave States as one large prison-house, with whites only concerned with exploiting slaves for their owners' advantage. He identifies Josiah Henson's narrative as the best picture of the evils peculiar to the slave life on the plantation.

[5] All citations from Brown's Narrative are from the second edition and will be cited parenthetically.

[6] Hedin discusses how the fear of insurrection and the southern backlash to the abolitionist onslaught of the 1830s caused many of the formal and informal slave codes to be tightened. Feeling even more victimized, many slaves took to flight, which involved cunning, deceit, and violence. Consequently, many of the behaviors that had previously been questionable at best appeared more frequently in the slave narratives during the same period in which morality became a central part of the anti-slavery argument ("American" 636).

Although the slave accounts of Briton Hammon, John Marrant, Olaudah Equiano, and Venture Smith may bring to mind the traditional picaresque, the likeness results from the slaves' own lives rather than from a shaping of their represented lives to fit a literary objective. In contrast, William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, Henry Bibb, Solomon Northup, and James W. C. Pennington are some of the slave narrators who overtly employ the picaresque mode to subvert slavery's logic in regard to morality.

[7] For further discussions of the importance of names to the slave, see Peter Wood and Herbert Gutman.

[8] Sigmund Freud has commented that the twisting round or even simple distortions of names, whether conscious or unconscious, should be seen as acts of aggression.

[9] Joseph C. Hathaway was president of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society and a Garrisonian. See Paul Jefferson's Introduction for a well-detailed account of Brown's relationship with Edmund Quincy.

[10] Claiming this passage has the effect of a witness's courtroom testimony, Frances Smith Foster in Witnessing Slavery asserts that Brown's concern with creating a particular response in his audience prevails over any concern with narrating a specific event from his personal life. While she accurately assesses Brown's audience adaptation, she underestimates the importance of his narrated actions and emotions. Rather than simply presenting the readers with a picture of the brutality inflicted upon slaves, Brown subtly delineates his own character to establish a kinship with his readers.

[11] Wilbert E. Moore provides a thoughtful discussion of the "problem of conversion" in slavery. Because heathenism was one of the early legal justifications of slavery, slaves who became converted began claiming freedom. With the stated purpose of "preventing damage to masters" on that basis, legislation was passed in Maryland and Virginia in the mid 1600s that stated that the conferring of baptism did not alter the condition of such persons in regard to their bondage or freedom. Moore notes that these early laws, which other colonies began passing too, were also to prevent masters from refusing to let their slaves become converted

(175). The justification of slavery on the condition of heathenism eventually shifted to a justification of the original heathenish state of blacks in Africa, which also provided the "basis for a distinctively American legal justification: inherent racial inferiority of the Negroes" (177).

Brown may be using the cases of Delphia and Solomon, to call the readers' attention to this early justification of slavery and to emphasize the irony between the slaves' and the masters' apparent spiritual conditions.

[12] Hedin argues that because pro-slavery Southerners were attacking the narrators on issues of factual accuracy and reliable character, it was thought that the best way for slave narrators to protect their integrity was to write in a simple, direct style and a calm voice. With this even-toned literary realism, narrators also could assure the readers that they were capable of maintaining control of themselves--an especially important idea in light of Southern claims that blacks were subhumans who needed to be restrained ("Muffled").

[13] For information on the legal non-existence of a slave's father, whether white or black, along with its implications, see Elkins and McKitrick.

[14] See Butterfield's "Use" for a discussion of Brown's use of understatement.

[15] W. Edward Farrison gives an even more thorough profile of Brown's life than does the Narrative. Gathering information from several of Brown's own letters, published works, and secondary materials, Farrison records biographical information about Brown's enslavement, his self-education, and his reception on the lecture circuit, including details about the Harwich, Massachusetts anti-slavery meeting in which his two fellow lecturers were mauled and he was picked up and thrown over the back of the stage and then beaten.

[16] Paul Jefferson notes that under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, fugitive slaves could be apprehended with a federal warrant. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, threatened the security of fugitive slaves and free African-Americans as well because it allowed putative slaves to be apprehended simply by oral affidavit.

[17] Jane and William Pease identify temperance as one of the reform movements which Northern free African-American leaders used for themselves and their communities to achieve dignity and freedom, not because alcoholism was a problem particular to their race but because abstinence so well represented the "moral uplift and social control" which was at the center of reform ("Seeking Economic Advancement" 124-43).

CHAPTER FIVE
Old Elizabeth

Stashed away in rare book collections for over a century, the Memoir of Old Elizabeth, a Coloured Woman (1863) has been as displaced in the literary realm as the author herself was as a slave and evangelist.[1] Long overlooked but deserving of attention, this account, albeit brief, provides a combination of narrative perspectives. Linking the slave narrative to a form of spiritual autobiography, Elizabeth offers an additional dimension to what Jacobs, Craft, and Brown have in their stories, though, in some ways, she presents a more myopic view of slavery.[2] Rather than giving a detailed history of the many and sundry abuses she may have suffered at the hand of her owner and telling *the* story of slavery to reflect the torture and sorrow of those still in bondage, she mainly concentrates on her own religious conversion experience. Diverging from these writers in another significant but less ethereal way, Elizabeth never presents a physical flight from slavery, having been manumitted at age thirty.[3] This is not to say, however, that she escaped all oppression when she received her free papers. Like Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, she had been bound on different levels, but she primarily represents her enslavement in spiritual terms. Despite this difference in emphasis among these slave narrators, a close analysis of Elizabeth's Memoir reveals that she too uses tropes of

distance and space to confirm her freedom and establish her sense of identity.

Rhetorical Strategies and Tropes of Distance

Just as a number of slaves, such as Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, found momentary relief from oppression through verbal or personality disguises, other slaves found respite through Christianity. Among the latter group who narrate their stories, it is not uncommon for them to refer to their enslavement as a kind of Egyptian bondage and their anticipated or actual escape from it, either by physically removing themselves or by dying, as reaching Canaan or the Promised Land. Some slave narrators, such as James W. C. Pennington, Kate Drumgoold, and Old Elizabeth, make the subject of Christianity an integral part of their accounts, while other writers, like Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, and Mattie J. Jackson, deal with it sparingly in their texts or briefly in appendixes. Regardless of the extent to which they address Christianity, these slave narrators generally all share the impulse to distinguish their brand of Christianity from that of the slave holders and the rest of the Others. As Stephen Butterfield asserts in Black Autobiography in America,

> Worship of God and Christ is a means of ideological struggle against the contemptible Christianity of the slaveholder and the guilt

> feelings incurred by the slave when he disobeys or violates his master's laws. It is also a means of bolstering his own courage to resist by assuring him that God is on his side, and of organizing his new life as a free man after he escapes. (18)

Even the slave narrators who, like William Wells Brown, do not describe or profess any personal connection with God except for a brief reference or two, recognize and show an appreciation for sincere Christianity when they see it or image it in their readers and benefactors; they also discern and unveil hypocrisy when they come across it in masters and traders. The former slaves who do incorporate personal testimonies of their conversions or relationships to God typically do not talk about these experiences in isolation but use them to repudiate the religious piety of slave holders.

For Old Elizabeth the narrator, Christianity becomes the lens through which she filters her represented life and relationships. Although she takes an approach noticeably different from Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, she too widens the space between herself and her position of oppression. This process begins when, as a young slave, she is sold away from her family:

> After this time, finding as my mother said, I had none in the world to look to but God, I betook myself to prayer, and in every lonely place I

found an altar. I mourned sore like a dove and chattered forth my sorrow, moaning in the corners of the field, and under the fences. (4)

In this passage, Elizabeth demonstrates her concern with a few different spatial configurations. As she seeks asylum in the fields, she not only momentarily moves away from her slave master but also brings herself closer to God. Through this two-fold action she initiates her eventual removal from slavery. Though brief, this is an important scene in her narrative because it signals a transition from the physical level of her enslavement to its spiritual dimensions. It also prepares her readers for certain polarizations between her oppressors and herself, which she later more clearly establishes.

One of the means by which Elizabeth separates herself from her slavish condition is through a vision of her spiritual state. She describes a time when, as a young slave, she feels so physically weak and alone that she thinks she will die, but, sensing she is not prepared to meet her Maker, her spirit cries out, "[M]ust I die in this state, and be banished from Thy presence forever? I own I am a sinner in Thy sight and not fit to live where thou art" (5). Then with her spiritual eye, she sees "an awful gulf of misery," and just when she thinks she is about to plunge into it, she hears a voice telling her to "rise up and pray." When she asks Christ to save her, she immediately

sees a "director, clothed in white raiment," who leads her down a "long journey to a fiery gulf" (5). She discovers that every one of her cries for mercy and salvation raises her higher and higher. Upon seeing the Savior standing with His hand outstretched to receive her, she thanks and praises Him, crying, "Thou has redeemed me--Thou has redeemed me to thyself" (6). What is especially notable about her initial reaction and this vision is that she speaks of her relationship to God in terms of spatial orientations.[4] She suggests that it is her sinfulness which separates her from God, but her enslavement and the fact that she has "nobody in the wide world to look to but God" are what first bring her to her knees. By mingling the subjects of slavery and sin, Old Elizabeth calls forth a doubling of associations, subtly prompting her readers to think of slavery as a sin and sin as a kind of slavery.

With these implications, the scene offers a few interrelated readings. As Elizabeth calls out to God for mercy and salvation, she, in her vision, physically moves toward God and also brings herself nearer to Him spiritually. Concurrently, she repositions herself in relation to her enslavement, moving away from her legal owner and becoming emotionally independent from him as she becomes dependent on God. In saying to God that He has *redeemed* her to Himself, she not only indicates that He has saved her from her sins but also articulates a transfer of

ownership, now making Him her master and willingly becoming His "slave." Relating this experience to her readers further enables her to confirm the distance she has put between her narrating self and her enslaved self and allows her to chart her spiritual development. Perhaps even more importantly, through the narration of this scene Old Elizabeth figuratively takes back the time in her life in which she was a slave and diminishes the power of her former owner and overseer by showing that in this moment she replaced them with God and thereby took some control over her status.

Through her scenes of "distraction" as a slave, Old Elizabeth also separates herself from her subordinate position. Describing these moments, she suggests a dual reality:

> [E]very day I went out among the hay-stacks, where the presence of the Lord overshadowed me, and I was filled with sweetness and joy, and was as a vessel filled with holy oil. In this way I continued for about a year; many times while my hands were at my work, my spirit was carried away to spiritual things. (7)

Her conversion experience has so altered her outlook that she can be engaged in the spirit realm while doing her work as a slave in the earthly realm. More than simply moving away from the reality of her position, she essentially

transcends her physical enslavement. By writing about these times, Old Elizabeth gives evidence that she is no longer bound, and she undermines the authority of the slave holders, who commonly felt that they owned a slave's body and soul. Relating something similar shortly after this passage, she tells of being sold even farther away from her family. For awhile she experiences "deep sorrows and plungings," but then, through prayer, her situation changes:

> [M]y peace gradually returned, and with it a great exercise and weight upon my heart for the salvation of my fellow-creatures; and I was often carried to distant lands and shown places where I should have to travel and deliver the Lord's message. Years afterwards, I found myself visiting those towns and countries that I had seen in the light as I sat at home at my sewing,--places of which I had never heard. (8)

In both of these circumstances, in which Elizabeth has been sold away from her family, the slave holders have acted against her or been indifferent toward her. Though she is at first deeply affected with a sense of loss and loneliness--which shows her readers that she values her family as they do theirs--she, through praying and seeking God, removes herself emotionally from these conditions. The fact that Old Elizabeth immediately follows up her descriptions of mourning with descriptions of being carried

to distant lands suggests that she has put her narrating self beyond the pale. Just as her masters regulated her physical and geographical space, she figuratively prohibits them from encroaching on her emotional territory by not dwelling on her own suffering at their hands. The only times when she shows them having any influence upon her occur when she wants to illustrate their inhumanity. In these two scenes, however, she relegates the slave holders to the distant background. Taking full advantage of these times of crisis, she transforms them into opportunities to speak of her spiritual journey. As she tells of her celestial travels, she figuratively breaks through the boundaries her master has set for her and implicitly argues that her identity is not fixed to her slave status.

Creating another barrier between her narrating self and her enslaved self, Old Elizabeth occasionally describes herself as having a divine commission. She first mentions this after telling her readers that the Lord redeemed her: "Immediately a light fell upon my head, and I was filled with light, and I was shown the world lying in wickedness, and was told I must go there, and call the people to repentance, for the day of the Lord was at hand. . . " (7). In this passage, she not only presents herself as having a new nature but also refutes slavery's chattel principle, which deems her sub-human and estimates her worth according to her ability to perform physical labor. While as a slave

she is not even acknowledged by law as a full person, she here rhetorically overturns that decree, asserting that God has blessed her and thinks her worthy to be used for a high purpose. Implicitly arguing that she has stood apart from the world's depravity and that she has an elevated status with God, Old Elizabeth enlarges the space between her narrating self and her assigned position of inferiority.

This "gracious calling" of hers, may account for how she speaks of her legal freedom. Although slave narrators generally show their escape from their masters as momentous occasions within their lives, Old Elizabeth's depiction of her release from slavery is anticlimactic. Confining it to one isolated paragraph, she treats it nonchalantly:

> Some years from this time I was sold to a Presbyterian for a term of years, as he did not think it right to hold slaves for life. Having served him faithfully my time out, he gave me my liberty, which was about the thirtieth year of my age. (8)

Through her cursory description, she figuratively deflates the power of her masters, showing that, in writing her narrative, she is now in the position of authority. Similarly, the brevity of the passage suggests that obtaining her legal freedom barely made an impact on her. Rather than pointlessly making herself vulnerable by writing at length about how this new liberty changed her life--and

thus placing her former owner in a superior position--she downplays it and moves right along to the next scene. Her placement of this passage is significant because it sheds light on her apparent indifference to being released from slavery. On both sides of it there are scenes in which she describes religious experiences. With this context, Old Elizabeth distances her narrating self from her enslaved self, implying that she has already psychologically overthrown her slave owner and has found in Christ a spiritual liberty, which makes her legal freedom pale in comparison.

Concerned with more than just the space between her current self and her former slavery status, Old Elizabeth, like Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, tries to pull her readers closer to her emotionally and psychologically. One of the ways she does this is by showing them that she too values the family and Christianity. The first thing she mentions in her story is her biological family gathered together as a unified body. What unites them is their relation to each other and her father's Sabbath morning readings in the Bible. She describes how this experience affected her profoundly:

> At these seasons, when I was but five years old, I often felt the overshadowing of the Lord's Spirit, without at all understanding what it meant; and these incomes and influences continued to attend

> me until I was eleven years old, particularly when I was alone, by which I was preserved from doing anything that I thought was wrong. (3)

In addition to showing her audience that she was part of a close-knit family, she indicates that her parents raised her and her siblings with a reverence for God. Though she acknowledges that at five years old she did not understand the workings of God's Spirit, in this hazy description--which reflects her spiritual occlusion then--she establishes the idea that God had His hand upon her even at a young age. By clarifying that she especially felt His presence when alone, she both anticipates that her audience may otherwise attribute her morally unerring behavior to the watchful eye of a parent and suggests that God's Spirit had a pervasive effect upon her conscience and life.

As Old Elizabeth aligns herself with her readers through a centralization of mutual ideologies, she also tries to foster in them a stronger repulsion toward slavery through an exposure of the institution's practices, which undermine their values and her own. In the very next experience she narrates, she shows her audience the destructive power of slavery:

> In the eleventh year of my age, my master sent me to another farm, several miles from my parents, brothers, and sisters, which was a great trouble

to me. At last I grew so lonely and sad I thought I should die, if I did not see my mother. (3)

Within this passage, she appeals to her readers in several ways. The fact that she arranges this scene next to her opening paragraph with nothing intervening signals a noteworthy connection: the Bible readings bring unity to her family gatherings, and, conversely, the slave holder steals her away and sabotages the consecrated union of her family. She subtly represents her master as the Other, taking actions with apparent disregard to the family and her own distress. In setting up this contrast, she prepares her audience for her eventual reversal of this power structure and her juxtaposition of the physical world with the spiritual realm. This scene also enables her to debunk the stereotype that African-Americans form no attachment to their kin, and to reinforce the idea that she holds a deep affection for her family. Although she only mentions her family a few more times in her narrative, this can be explained by the fact that she was sold away to different owners and apparently lost contact with them, and by the fact that she focuses on her spiritual development and ministry for the rest of her narrative. She does, however, give the readers a sense of her mother's presence in that her parting words to her--that she has nobody to look to but God--resonate in many subsequent scenes.

One of Old Elizabeth's most overt strategies for moving closer to her audience emotionally and psychologically involves comparisons between herself and Biblical figures. By the time she begins to make these analogies in her narrative, she has already shown herself developing a close relationship with God and has become comfortable with her public voice. As she narrates the time when some religious leaders objected to a woman preaching, she tries to guide her readers' reactions to this scene by claiming that God has ordained her:

> [A]nd the Lord showed me that it was His will I should be resigned to die any death that might be my lot, in carrying his message, and be entirely crucified to the world, and sacrifice *all* to His glory that was then in my possession, which His witnesses, the holy Apostles, had done before me. (10)

Through this statement, she offers as irrefutable evidence her testimony that she has had a personal enlightenment from God. She thus rhetorically attempts to prohibit her readers from questioning her calling. In saying that it was God's will that she die unto self to accomplish His purposes, she suggests that her mission is not based on selfish aims. Because she speaks in such absolute terms, she encourages her readers to approve of her mission, implying that if they

do not, then they are basically questioning God's ability to call a woman and defaming the vocation of the holy Apostles.

While some slave narrators, such as Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, use the language of clergymen, the Declaration of Independence, and other well-respected individuals to bolster their credibility with their readers, Old Elizabeth refers to the ultimate source of authority to confer legitimacy on her actions and to close the distance between herself and her readers. She describes Jesus as one with whom she senses a kinship because they both were misunderstood and persecuted in their public ministry: "I was rejected by the elders and rulers, as Christ was rejected by the Jews before me, and while others were excused in crimes of the darkest dye, I was hunted down in every place where I appointed a meeting" (13). Through this analogy, she implies that she, an innocent like Jesus, has been unjustly opposed in her work by the very persons who should clearly understand and most ardently support her calling. Making this connection in her Memoir allows her to separate herself figuratively from these religious persecutors, and it enables her to show her audience that she has undergone the affliction of a martyr.

Using another typological reference, Elizabeth compares her situation to that of the Old Testament prophet Daniel and, here again, shows herself as being victimized by the religious Other: "But the persecution against me increased,

and a complaint was carried forward, as was done formerly against Daniel, the servant of God, and the elders came out with indignation for my holding meetings contrary to discipline--being a woman" (14-15). Including these analogies is a perceptive maneuver on Elizabeth's part because it enables her to guide her readers' responses so that at the same time she reveals a negative reaction which the church leaders had to her, she claims a kind of righteousness or sanctification of mission by aligning herself with well-known and respected Biblical figures, and thereby ingratiating herself with her audience.

Balancing what might look to her readers like self-glorification in comparing herself to the holy Apostles, Jesus, and Daniel, Old Elizabeth frequently takes a humble stance in her slave narrative. Relating her experience of turning forty-two and sensing that God was instructing her to share His message, she acknowledges her own inadequacy: "As I could read but little, I questioned within myself how it would be possible for me to deliver the message, when I did not understand the Scriptures" (9). Rather than making the readers look down on her with contempt, this admission enables them to see that she does not consider herself above them spiritually. Similarly, when the prayer meeting she and some African-American women were having was interrupted by a watchman and she describes how all but she and two others were frightened away, she allows her readers to see

past her outward demeanor to her inner vulnerability: "A feeling of weakness came over me for a short time, but I soon grew warm and courageous in the Spirit" (11). Certainly, Old Elizabeth did not have to share these intimate details for clarity's sake; she could have just given a general description of her actions. In choosing to do so, however, she attributes her strength to God, which advantageously contributes to her self-portrait. While laying bare her own human frailty and giving glory to God, she tries to position herself closer to her readers psychologically and spiritually, for she undoubtedly knows that they would approve of the candor and spiritual integrity she exhibits. The humility that she shows actually encourages her audience to identify her with Christ.

Old Elizabeth's Memoir represents a departure from most slave narratives because it primarily addresses spiritual enslavement rather than physical enslavement and because its author portrays some unexpected figures as Others. Whereas one might traditionally think of slave holders as overtly inhumane, evil, or abusive, Elizabeth calls that notion into question by projecting some of the ministers and elders of the church as types of spiritual slave holders. She first encounters such individuals among the religious professors from whom she seeks guidance concerning her call to deliver a message. Though she does not overtly label them as

threatening, she says they argued that there was nothing in the Bible that would sanction such activity and that it was too hard for women to travel. Illustrating their oppressive nature, she describes how they affected her outlook: "These things greatly discouraged me, and shut up my way, and caused me to resist the Spirit" (9). They may be likened to slave holders because they entangled her in spiritual confusion and confinement. Old Elizabeth not only shows her readers that those who were "accounted pious" gave her "no help," but also holds the latter responsible for obstructing God's plan for her life. While they succeeded in suppressing her voice at the time because as a young believer she was too shy or unsure of her ability to hear and know God's voice, she now spiritually separates herself from them. By disclosing how these religious professors shackled her as a woman, she demonstrates her liberating identity in Christ.

Despite her new level of communion with God, Elizabeth still faced opposition. She notes how some "religious" individuals aligned themselves in thought and action with those who laid no claim to the Gospel: "Our meeting gave great offense, and we were forbid holding any more assemblies. Even the elders of our meeting joined with the wicked people, and said such meetings must be stopped, and that woman quieted" (12). By connecting elders with the wicked, she figuratively distances herself from them and

indicates that these religious figures have separated themselves from God by trying to block her from doing His work. She identifies this same kind of rejection when she narrates a scene about her interaction with a congregation with whom she had assembled:

> I felt that I was despised on account of this gracious calling, and was looked upon as a speckled bird by the ministers to whom I looked for instruction, and to whom I resorted every opportunity for the same; but when I would converse with them, some would cry out, 'You are an enthusiast;' and others said, 'the Discipline did not allow of any such division of the work;' until I began to think I surely must be wrong. (13)

In her narration, one may detect her assumption that in preaching the Gospel and leading prayer meetings, she would be on the same side spiritually as the religious leaders, but she reveals a different reality: instead of sensing an affiliation with them, she feels an alienation from them. Through both scenes, Elizabeth suggests these religious leaders view her as a threat and feel a woman should not be assuming a position of spiritual authority. She does not, however, even claim any power or authority from herself; she continually credits God and ascribes the victory unto Him.

Vividly showing the Otherness of the religious leaders who confront her, Elizabeth juxtaposes their response to her with God's response to her:

> I returned, much strengthened by the Lord's power, to go on to the fulfillment of His work, although I was again pressed by the authorities of the church to which I belonged, for imprudency; and so much condemned, that I was sorely tempted by the enemy to turn aside into the wilderness. (16-17)

Rhetorically setting God and the authorities of the church apart--depicting the latter as Others to both God and herself--she shows God as sustaining and energizing her to action on His behalf and the religious leaders as trying to weaken her and immobilize her from preaching. Her relationship with the latter in some ways resembles Harriet Jacobs's with Dr. Flint. While she is not subjected to sexual harassment, she is verbally assaulted because of her gender. The church patriarchs act as ravishers in that they try to penetrate her soul with their elitist dogma, violating her spirit for their own purposes and leaving her traumatized. Although to these religious officials she represents an Other because she implicitly challenges their hierarchy of authority, she counters this idea through her narrative and more forcefully depicts them as the Others in their opposition to her doing God's work and in their similarities to a physical slave holder who tries to break

his slave's will. Repudiating their sanctimoniousness allows her to distance herself from them emotionally and psychologically and attests to her spiritual freedom.

To illustrate how some of the religious people in her narrative possess values antithetical to those held by herself and her audience, Elizabeth argues that they do not just join the overtly unrighteous in opposing her but that actually some of them only have the form of godliness, not the thing itself; their supposed righteousness is simply a masquerade. The implication in her description of the pseudo-righteous is that her audience should and will believe that those persons who protest against her endeavors lack the Spirit's enlightenment and that those whose hearts are inspired by God will support her mission:

> Individuals creep into the church that are unregenerate, and after they have been there awhile, they fancy that they have got the grace of God, while they are destitute of it. They may have a degree of light in their heads, but evil in their hearts; which makes them think they are qualified to be judges of the ministry, and their conceit makes them very busy in the matters of religion, judging of the revelations that are given to others, while they have received none themselves. Being thus mistaken, they are

calculated to make a great deal of confusion in the church, and clog the true ministry. (15)

Because Old Elizabeth carefully words her accusation in general terms, not identifying certain personages, she avoids implicating herself in the same sin of sitting in judgment. Despite not naming the individuals of whom she speaks, the context of her commentary leads her audience to see, unmistakably, whom she is charging with these reprehensible practices. Like Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, who write about their suffering in such a way that they reflect a communal slave biography, she, in her non-specificity, does not speak as a lone victim but rather conveys the religious persecution which many of God's chosen have suffered because of sanctimonious individuals. Although she was publicly denounced by the elders and, on account of her being a woman, chastised for holding meetings, she spiritually and psychologically widens the space between herself and her accusers by exposing their Christianity as a sham. In her contention that the people who oppose her work are hindering God's will, she also may be seen as drawing her readers closer to her emotionally, for she knows that they will want to distinguish their Christianity from that of the unregenerate. Perhaps one of the reasons that Elizabeth appears so vehement in her declaration that these people are Others to her and her audience is that they pose more of a threat to her identity because outwardly, or in

terms of their actions, they seem to have something in common with her--religion. She, however, wants to show herself as divinely set apart from them, as having God's special call on her life.

Although Old Elizabeth does not use her rhetorical strategies and tropes of distance to champion abolitionism as Jacobs, Craft, and Brown do, they are just as crucial to her personally as they are to the other slave narrators. Despite the fact that she does not give many details regarding her legal enslavement, one can see that she was subject to abuse and repression nonetheless. That she was frequently silenced by the church after she had been emancipated and started her public ministry gives her a powerful incentive for wanting to have her voice heard. Employing these rhetorical strategies in her narrative allows her to gain control over those silenced moments of the past and assert the worth of her own identity as a free African-American woman minister of the Gospel.

Narrative Structure of Romance

As with Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, Old Elizabeth emplots her brief narrative as a Romance. At the beginning of the Memoir of Old Elizabeth, a Coloured Woman, she pictures herself as enmeshed in physical slavery. Representing her initiation into the world of experience, she describes being ripped from her family unit and made to suffer persecution--

the overseer ties her up with a rope and gives her some stripes, which leave marks for weeks--for having acted upon the natural desire to be with her mother. Although she does not seek her own release from slavery, she shows her readers that, in the midst of her physical bondage, she can sometimes attain a spiritual transcendence over her circumstances by turning to God and fixing her attention so much on Him that as her physical body is at work, her spirit is elsewhere. Such passages constitute a significant part of her narrative structure because through them she demonstrates how far she has removed herself from the tyrannical power of her slave master and overseer.

Even after her release from physical slavery, when one might think that she has left behind the world of abuse, she faces harassment and ostracism from church leaders, from those who should most clearly exemplify Christ's love despite doctrinal differences. Showing staunch courage and faith, Elizabeth says, "I persevered, notwithstanding the opposition of those who were looked upon as higher and wiser" (14). She repeatedly encounters this spiritual buffeting that might easily discourage the most hearty of believers. In narrating one scene, she reveals how discouraging these attacks were to her:

> I was again pressed by the authorities of the church to which I belonged, for imprudency; and so much condemned, that I was sorely tempted by the

> enemy to turn aside into the wilderness. I was so embarrassed and encompassed, I wondered within myself whether all that were called to be mouth piece [sic] for the Lord, suffered such deep wadings as I experienced. (16-17)

In each of the trials or conflicts she narrates, Elizabeth carefully frames the situation as a battle between good and evil. Though this frequently takes the form of an outward opposition, she also experiences struggles between light and darkness within herself. These inner struggles manifest themselves, however, soon after she has undergone temptation or persecution from an Other, and she characterizes the darkness not so much as a part of herself but as an outside infiltration, such as the words of the church elders who tell her that her meetings must stop. One may see Elizabeth emplotting her history as a Romance in that she includes not only scenes which illustrate her being victimized by the Others but also adjacent scenes which reveal her being victorious through Christ.

Although she has numerous moments of crisis during her enslavement and her ministry, the central crisis of her narrative comes after some church elders tell her that the calling she feels God has given her is not valid. Their words discourage her and cause her to resist the Holy Spirit until she returns to the Lord and feels she is "nothing, and knew nothing, and wrestled and prayed to the Lord that He

would fully reveal His will, and make the way plain" (9). As she struggles, a heavenly light falls upon her, and her fears vanish; she is now resolved to go to prison or die, whichever is her destiny. Instead of being defeated by trial, she manifests inner strength, a form of freedom. In describing her closeness with God and her new resolve, she articulates the psychological distance she has put between herself and her adverse circumstances, becoming impervious to her religious oppressors. This emptying of her self and total surrendering to God represent a victory over the world of experience in that for Elizabeth it results in a new level of communication with God. Her relationship with Him no longer simply consists of praying; it now involves yielding her body, soul, and spirit--her whole being--to the Lord and communing with Him. Before this time, God had seemed distant, but here, she draws closer to God and He seems closer to her because she has acknowledged her utter dependence on Him. In subsequent scenes, Elizabeth shows her readers that by confessing her weakness, she becomes strong through Him.

While this crisis with the church elders might not be as graphically traumatic for her as some other moments she narrates, it signifies the transformation of her self and her ministry. This newly found spiritual liberty enables Elizabeth to use her public voice with confidence and power. So far has she removed herself--or allowed God to remove

her--from her days of slavery, that she leads a ministry and later establishes a "school for coloured orphans" (19). Rather than leaving her readers with the idea that former slaves are doomed to lead tragic lives of defeat, she offers hope through her narrative structure of Romance, demonstrating the idea that light will triumph over darkness and that all have access to the same kind of spiritual victory she has experienced.

Heteroglossia of Authenticating Documents

Just as Old Elizabeth uses her narrative structure to establish herself as a victor over slavery and religious bondage, she incorporates heteroglossia in her account to confirm the validity of her own voice and to contextualize her personal history. In contrast to Jacobs and Craft, who employ numerous kinds of heteroglossia in their narratives, she, writing a much shorter and a more descriptive account, uses fairly little overt heteroglossia. The few forms she presents include the inserted genre and the speech of characters.

While Craft and Brown begin their narratives with prefaces by well-respected individuals, and Craft opens his account with a few literary allusions and a citation from the Declaration of Independence, Old Elizabeth introduces herself and her narrative with a Scriptural reference on the title page: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is

neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:25). Situated right below her title, Memoir of Old Elizabeth, a Coloured Woman, it serves immediately to ward off attitudes of superiority that her title might have evoked in some of her readers. In using this verse, she not only informs her audience of the spiritual orientation of her narrative, but also declares the spiritual equality she has found in Christ. By appropriating what would be the highest source of authority for her readers, she may also be subtly, or even unconsciously, revealing a belief that her story could set some people on edge and/or that her readers may need coaching for interpreting her account in the way she wants them to view it.

Reflecting the heteroglot nature of this context, the Biblical passage conditions the meaning of her text, and, conversely, her narrative shapes the interpretation of this verse. In retrospect, one can see the Biblical reference putting her on the same level with her Christian audience, reflecting her concerns as an African-American woman preacher who has been legally enslaved, and creating a spiritual barrier between herself and those who have reviled her and her ministry. It is not until one reads her account, though, that the significance of the quotation to the meaning of her story is fully realized. Placing this verse on the title page, however, is a strategic move on Old

Elizabeth's part because it serves as a directive to her readers. Later in her narrative she describes how, on the basis of her being a female minister, she is confronted by religious leaders--people whom her audience may have otherwise identified with or respected. Having already provided a quotation which speaks against hierarchy, she bestows on herself the freedom to speak with impunity, and she guides her audience to interpret the situation in light of this verse. The question overshadowing her narrative becomes, "Do you believe in the validity and sanctity of the Bible?" Her accusers, in turn, appear in direct opposition to the Bible, though they claim to speak with God's authority.

Through the use of another Biblical passage, Old Elizabeth further showcases the religious patriarchy as oppressive to her as a woman. She describes the time when, having been reminded by the Lord of a message she needed to deliver, she felt moved to open the Bible, and her eyes fell on this verse: "Gird up thy loins now like a man, and answer thou me. Obey God rather than man" (9). Unsure of herself and timid about using her voice in public, she sought counsel from "religious professors." Their response to her attempts to stifle her voice: "They all told me there was nothing that would sanction such exercise. It was hard for men to travel, and what would women do?" (9). While she believes God has instructed her to carry His message

regardless of what others might say, the patriarchs, who apparently do not even accept the verse, view her reading of it as a threat to their order. Though they respond to her as if they are *the* authority on such matters, she figuratively problematizes their reply by providing her audience with the context of her reading. The religious professors imply that Elizabeth concocted this plan for her own purposes, but because she has already explained that in the past she declined to speak in religious meetings, she guides her readers to dismiss the idea that she has appropriated this Scripture for self-seeking aims. By following up the religious leaders' response to her with a message from the Lord, noting that it was His will that she sacrifice her life to carry His message, she de-authorizes the patriarchs' language. In relating this experience, Old Elizabeth vividly displays the idea that she has obeyed God rather than men and, thus, demonstrates the psychological and spiritual distance she has put between herself and those who wish to relegate her to silence.

Although most of her Memoir consists of personal reflections, Old Elizabeth selects short reconstructed dialogues to define her freedom and identity against the backdrop of religious enslavement. During one of her prayer meetings with African-American women, a watchman intrudes and frightens away the majority of the participants. After describing how she initially felt weak in this situation,

Elizabeth presents his threat to her: "The man then said to me, 'I was sent here to break up your meeting. Complaint has been made to me that the people round here cannot sleep for the racket'" (11). Having, as she says, grown strong in the Spirit, Elizabeth shows herself taking two of his words and inserting a space for the free play of meaning:

> I replied, 'a good racket is better than a bad racket. How do they rest when the ungodly are dancing and fiddling till midnight? Why are they not molested by the watchmen? and why should we be for praising God, our Maker? Are we worthy of greater punishment for praying to Him? and are we to be prohibited from doing so, that sinners may remain slumbering in their sins?' (11)

As a watchman, he represents a figure of dominance, but in taking his language and re-orienting it to her perspective, she reverses the power-structure and demands that he acknowledge the legitimacy of their voices and their right to be heard. This heteroglot scene works to align Elizabeth with God and to show her readers one of the social influences with which she and other African-Americans had to contend for authority, even in the private domain of one's home. Highlighting the distance between her discourse and that of her oppressor also allows her to articulate and confirm the idea that she has liberated herself from spiritual bondage.

Through a reconstructed dialogue bound up with meanings similar to the watchman scene, Old Elizabeth provides another example of how to recoup a past moment and makes commentary both on herself and one of her accusers. She describes a situation in which one of the white male ministers she encounters during her ministry travels denounced the validity of the revelation she felt she had received from God:

> In a conversation with one of these, he said, 'You think you have these things by revelation, but there has been no such thing as revelation since Christ's ascension.' I asked him where the apostle John got his revelation while he was in the Isle of Patmos. With this, he rose up and left me, and I said in my spirit, get thee behind me Satan. (18)

As Elizabeth points out how her situation resembles circumstances found in the Bible, she articulates a difference between herself and this religious Other, for if the latter closely resembled John the apostle, she essentially would be calling attention to a connection her audience could applaud rather than disdain. Although this minister uses the word "revelation" in an authoritative way, Old Elizabeth, in contextualizing the word with a reference to the apostle, figuratively deflates his religious pomposity and thereby bolsters her own authority and sense

of spiritual freedom. In addition to functioning as a kind of reprimand to the church leaders who opposed and persecuted her, this sample of heteroglossia serves to shore up her own identity because she can figuratively join the company of one who has been recognized as receiving God's revelation and power. Providing this comparison lends credence to her mission and implies that her calling was just as real and valid as the calling of John. The invocation of this Biblical precedent also anticipates and answers those of her readers who might question her spiritual status in light of the objections and opposition from church leaders: it reinforces the idea that carrying out a divinely appointed work does not necessarily mean that God's servants will be wholly accepted by the Church and not face opposition.

During her lifetime, Old Elizabeth was repeatedly confronted by persons who tried to control her identity as a woman and stifle her ministry. In her narrative, however, she essentially obscures her gender, claiming that to God it is an irrelevant fact. By explicitly drawing out a heteroglossic incorporation of other examples of religious persecution and repression, she places her own story into the wider history of religious persecution and sanctions her own ministry. As she exposes patriarchal oppression, she de-privileges their language of supremacy and distinguishes

her spiritual identity as one beholden to herself and the Lord.

Levels of Freedom Imagined and Realized

Like Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, Old Elizabeth writes her narrative to chart her progress away from her enslaved self and to establish her liberty. Although she compresses her history into just nineteen pages, it yields at least three stories that pertain to her freedom. Through these interwoven layers she addresses her physical enslavement, spiritual enslavement, and vocal enslavement. Discerning and following her progress is fairly challenging, however, because of the nature of these multiple levels and because of the fact that, in contrast to the other narrators, she does not, except on one occasion, specifically describe her condition in terms of "bondage," "enslavement," "liberty," and "freedom." Though the kinds of oppression and freedom she experiences are frequently entangled, they are more recognizable and accessible when looked at separately.

Whereas in most antebellum slave narratives writers focus on their physical enslavement and their struggles for freedom, Old Elizabeth departs from this practice by choosing instead to focus on her spiritual trials and life after slavery. In the narration of her physical enslavement, she leaves out direct commentary on her slave status or inclination toward freedom. One senses her

awareness of how slavery impinges upon her life when her master sells her away from her family and when an overseer not only denies her request to see her mother but whips her for going without his consent. Although as she describes the time of her enslavement she speaks of deliverance and redemption, these ideas pertain to her spiritual life rather than to her slave status. She does legally obtain her physical freedom at around age thirty, but, as she acknowledges, this comes about not because of her own efforts but because of her new Presbyterian master's belief that slaves should not be bound for life.

One reason why she does not overtly mention a desire for freedom as she narrates her physical enslavement may be that she wants her readers to center their attention instead on her spiritual development, to see God at work.[5] Elizabeth may also feel that by not mentioning her desire for freedom, she can figuratively and psychologically distance herself from the control of the Others, not giving them the satisfaction of knowing that they have managed to deny her the thing she, perhaps, wanted quite badly, but instead showing her readers that the slave masters have not ultimately succeeded in owning her identity.

In her Memoir, Old Elizabeth deals with not only physical bondage but also spiritual and psychological bondage. Although she has been raised by religious parents and been exposed to the teaching of the Bible and sensed

God's overshadowing presence since at least the age of five, she does not gain spiritual freedom until about age twelve. Before that time, her thoughts had been turned toward God because of her mother's parting words to her, but until she feels deathly ill and sees with her spiritual eye a fiery gulf of misery which separates herself from God, she does not realize her need for mercy and salvation. Elizabeth describes her spiritual transformation in terms that suggest she has just been given her spiritual freedom:

> At this moment I felt that my sins were forgiven me, and the time of my deliverance was at hand. I sprang forward and fell at his feet, giving Him all the thanks and highest praises, crying, Thou hast redeemed me--Thou hast redeemed me to thyself. I felt filled with light and love. (6)

This new spiritual liberty enables Elizabeth to transcend her circumstances and to concentrate on heavenly matters as her body works. After she obtains her physical freedom and begins her public ministry, however, she continues to exhibit signs of bondage.

As some of the church elders question and oppose her ministry, she still is subject to psychological oppression. As she talks about being harassed in every place where she appointed a meeting and being tempted to commit suicide, she speaks of her realization that God will set her free from this oppression: "If I endured a little longer, the Lord

was pleased to deliver me from this gloomy, melancholy state in his own time" (13). For Elizabeth, absolute psychological freedom does not seem possible until she parts from this world and goes on to heaven. Though she has obtained her physical and spiritual freedom, she repeatedly struggles with the temptation to doubt, to look at the obstacles in her present situation. In the closing statement of her narrative, Old Elizabeth suggests the idea that her total liberty will not come until she sees God face to face. Her sense of spiritual freedom, though, enables her to have the faith to believe that she will eventually find total peace with herself and God.

To understand another kind of freedom that Elizabeth eventually realizes, one needs to examine her Memoir from another perspective. In addition to having been enslaved physically and spiritually, she also has been in bondage vocally. Just as Elizabeth speaks of her slave experience with references to her spiritual condition, after she receives her physical liberty, she also discusses her spiritual and religious experiences with references to various kinds of oppressors and bondage. The primary conflict within her account involves a struggle between herself and Others for the control of her words. When she listens to God and uses her voice, she senses a spiritual liberty, but when she holds back or allows Others to dominate her words, she experiences spiritual bondage.

Though she does not specifically address this matter in terms of enslavement or freedom, Old Elizabeth demonstrates that through her use of words or her response to them she can determine whether she walks in liberty or not. Her recognition of this connection, however, does not immediately follow her conversion. She first needs to learn how to use her words and distinguish God's voice from the voice of Others, those who would try to deceive her or stifle her voice.

Pointing out her former lack of discernment with words, Elizabeth the narrator describes how one day as she was going to her usual place to pray, she was "assailed" with the following language: "Are you going there to weep and pray? what a fool! there are older professors than you are, and they do not take that way to get to heaven; people whose sins are forgiven ought to be joyful and lively, and not struggling and praying" (7-8). She naively listens to this voice and, accepting it as truth, runs off to play. Significantly, Elizabeth describes how right after she decides not to pray, she experiences a change in her spirit: "But at this moment the light that was in me became darkened, and the peace and joy that I once had, departed from me" (8). This sense of gloom and sorrow results from what appears to be a choice, however unconscious, between the forces of good and evil. When she hears this voice, which signifies the Other, and accepts it by acting upon its

advice, she distances herself from God and puts the deceiver into the position of her master.

Around this time, Elizabeth has been moved back to the farm where her mother lives and then sold to a stranger. Not sensing the "light" or "sweetness" she formerly knew, she experiences sorrow until, by praying and wrestling with the Lord, she gradually regains her peace. In narrating this scene, Old Elizabeth emphasizes the idea that she has made God her Master again by noting the kind of spiritual bonds which accompany her peace and by showing her spirit transcending her physical condition as a slave to an earthly owner and being transported by God to other lands: "My peace gradually returned, and with it a great exercise and weight upon my heart for the salvation of my fellow-creatures; and I was often carried to distant lands and shown places where I should have to travel and deliver the Lord's message" (8). Elizabeth demonstrates her submission to God as Master by yielding herself and her words to Him through prayer. And it is through this earnest communication that she escapes the darkness that threatens to oppress and dominate her spirit.

Until the age of forty-two, she does not speak much, but then God reveals to her that the time has come for her to deliver the message He gave her. Though she initially questions herself about how she could do this when she, barely literate, does not understand the Scriptures, she

then feels guided to open the Bible next to her, her eyes then falling on a passage entreating one to obey God rather than man. In deep spiritual distress, she consults some religious professors to ask them what is wrong with her, but "none could throw any light upon such impressions," and all told her the Scriptures would not sanction such exercises for a woman (9). Ironically, these religious professors function in the same capacity as the oppressor who, during Elizabeth's physical enslavement, assailed her with language that momentarily succeeded in suppressing her voice and bringing darkness into her life. In describing the result of listening to these pious men, Old Elizabeth suggests that she fell under a kind of bondage: "These things greatly discouraged me, and shut up my way, and caused me to resist the Spirit" (9). As she listens and accepts the words of pious elders as truth--which she suggests in saying these things "shut up my way"--she unconsciously gives them power over herself and, at least temporarily, elevates them to the position of master.

It is only when Elizabeth submits herself to the Lord and prays that He will "make the way plain" (9) that she senses a light from heaven, which dismisses all her fears and enables her to deliver His message at whatever cost to herself. In her description of God's response to this resolution, she portrays Him as a master with expectations of His slave, saying that He wanted her to sacrifice

everything to His glory. Although God, as her master, requires that she give her life to Him completely, He brings her joy with the evidence of a clean heart, and He infuses her soul with peace. In contrast to her relationships with the Others (the slave holders, the verbal assailant, and the pious men), which bring darkness, despair, and bondage and try to nullify her voice, this kind of master/slave relationship with God paradoxically offers her a sense of liberty and empowers her to use her voice.

When Elizabeth forms this new resolution to give herself over entirely to God, she experiences a transformation in her spiritual life: no longer is she simply feeling the overshadowing presence of the Lord, as she had since she was five years old. Her description of her relationship with God reveals a new level of communication that goes beyond her previous supplication: "And I walked and talked with God, and my soul was illuminated with heavenly light, and I knew nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified" (10). It is her resolution to accept her position as "slave" to God which gives her a new sense of self, a self which gains an identity through Christ.[6]

Because in the narration of her life before her release from physical enslavement Old Elizabeth records selected conversations, she gives the impression that she previously did not use her voice except in private when she petitioned

God for solace. Even in those times, however, she seems unaccustomed to using her voice until God teaches her how to pray. The only times that she shows a verbal encounter with someone other than God occur when she asks the overseer if she can visit her mother and is denied, when her mother tells her she has "none but God in the world" to turn to, and when the Other assails her with language to dissuade her from praying. All three of these encounters deal with the subject of communication, either severing it or, in the case of her mother, fostering it. By including in the narration of her enslavement these scenes of the Others, Elizabeth mimics what these slave holder sorts tried to accomplish--the suppression of her voice. She also figuratively distances herself from her physical enslavement and the power of the Others by concentrating her attention mainly on the spiritual realm, thus placing herself above the influence of earthly matters. As she does this, she effectively silences her physical master and articulates a separation between slavery and her self.

This new level of communication with God enables Elizabeth to gain confidence in using her voice horizontally as well as vertically. Just as she demonstrated an unfamiliarity and a halting manner with her private voice when she first began praying to God, she also initially reveals a hesitancy and an apparent intimidation in using her public voice right after she gains her physical liberty:

"As I now lived in a neighborhood where I could attend religious meetings, occasionally I felt moved to speak a few words therein; but I shrank from it--so great was the cross to my nature" (8-9). Yet unacquainted with the significance of using her voice, she allows her fears to shut down the words within her. Similarly, when she feels prompted to deliver the message she has received and then opens the Bible and reads, "Gird up thy loins like a man, and answer thou me. Obey God rather than man" (9), she feels troubled and depressed and asks several religious professors what ails her. This experience signifies a kind of spiritual bondage, because she has given credence to the voice of the Other and thus questioned the validity of her own voice.

Elizabeth releases herself from bondage, however, when she finally calls out to God and completely surrenders herself to Him. Through this new spiritual liberation, in which she communes with God, she becomes so empowered that the very next day, she acts upon the Spirit's direction and secures a house to hold a women's prayer meeting. At the end of the evening when the women ask Elizabeth to close the meeting, she feels compelled to say a few words. In contrast to the previous times when God has prompted her to speak, she here exercises her public voice, and as she is speaking, "the house seemed filled with light" (10). Old Elizabeth's comment about the effusion of light suggests that there is a direct correlation between her decision to

use or not use her voice and the immediately felt moral atmosphere. Though her choice to speak here implies that she has gained confidence with her public voice, it does not preclude her from encountering challenges from the Others.

One of the more subtle yet effective rhetorical strategies Elizabeth uses to demonstrate that her words have power involves her practice of not acknowledging any threats or opposition from the Others except when she has made the decision to use her voice. Generally, whenever she speaks or resolves to speak, she subsequently faces a slave holder figure. Soon after she talks at the prayer meeting and is about to close, the watchman appears, and all but she and two of the sisters become so tremulous from his presence that they leave. Elizabeth's initial "feeling of weakness" results from her recognition of his power and authority and from her own inexperience with resisting domination. This reaction replicates, in part, the early responses she had to the verbal assailant's words and the religious professors' pronouncements. Although she manages to evade permanent control by these figures, she temporarily becomes verbally immobilized by them because they bring up the idea that what she intends to do with her voice is contrary to traditional practice, the implied argument being that breaking away from what has been done in the past is wrong and threatening. Elizabeth demonstrates a lack of spiritual discernment as she accepts their words as truth and tries to rely on her

own wisdom and strength to dispel the gloom. In her description of her encounter with the watchman, however, she gives evidence of her spiritual growth by showing that she does not merely react from her human inclination to fear but finds sufficiency and courage from a reliance on the Holy Spirit. Rather than simply acquiescing to the watchman's plan of breaking up the prayer meeting, Elizabeth refuses to permit him to occupy the position of master.

In addition to displaying her spiritual development by admitting her own inadequacy and turning to God for strength, Elizabeth shows it by actively resisting the watchman's charge and using her public voice to challenge his authority. As she narrates this scene, Elizabeth highlights the idea that in using her voice for what she sees as God's purposes, she gains a supernatural confidence:

> While speaking these few words I grew warm with *heavenly* zeal, and laid my hand upon him and addressed him with gospel truth, "how do sinners sleep in hell, after slumbering in their sins here, and crying, 'let me rest, let me rest,' while sporting on the very brink of hell? Is the cause of God to be destroyed for this purpose?" (11)

This stance differs markedly from her previous passive reactions to the Others: she not only answers back but also

assertively challenges the legitimacy of the position he tries to assume in breaking up their prayer meeting.

Reinforcing the idea that God has infused her words with power, Elizabeth describes the watchman as being so overcome by what she says that he completely subordinates himself to her, thus effecting a reversal in their original positions with each other:

> Speaking several words more to this amount, he [sic] turned pale and trembled, and begged my pardon, acknowledging that it was not his wish to interrupt us, and that he would never disturb a religious assembly again. He then took leave of me in a comely manner and wished us success. (11-12)

This kind of transforming power that she here experiences with her public voice parallels the directional control she felt with her private voice when in her mind she stood on the brink of a fiery gulf and discovered that each cry to God raised her higher and higher. Just as she senses darkness and bondage when she intends to speak but holds back, she conversely experiences mastery of her situation when she employs her voice for God's purposes.

Through the writing of her Memoir, Old Elizabeth takes dominion over her whole history and gives tangible evidence that she has become fluent in using her voice. As she presents this most vocal of testaments to the public, she

shows her former accusers that they have not succeeded in silencing her and that she has obeyed God rather than man. Aligning herself with the higher purposes of the Lord, as one of His anointed, and characterizing the religious patriarchs as tyrants, she psychologically and spiritually moves herself away from them and affirms her autonomy.

The Memoir of Old Elizabeth, a Coloured Woman makes a noteworthy contribution to the literary genre of slave narrative by providing a hybrid of the slave account and the spiritual autobiography. Because of this combination, her text is enriched with new complexities of meaning. In charting her conversion experience, Elizabeth shows one of the ways in which slaves might have achieved a transcendence over the external circumstances of their physical enslavement. Despite the fact that, unlike Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, she attained her physical release through manumission from her master rather than through an escape, she still faced other kinds of bondage. Like Harriet Jacobs's narrative, the Memoir also provides a forum to expose the oppression of women. Though they are radically different in nature, the abuses these women were subjected to are similar in that they are gender-related violations of intimate territories, both spiritual and sexual. In one degree or another, what all of these slave narrators have in common is the fact that their various spatial orientations have been manipulated by slave holder types. While Jacobs,

Craft, Brown, and Old Elizabeth all succeed in reconfiguring their positions and attaining a few kinds of liberty, they cannot, however, wholly leave behind their identities as slaves in that, like most individuals, they are defined or define themselves against that which they were.

NOTES

[1] Howard Dodson, of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, comments that much of the body of literature produced by nineteenth-century African-Americans remained relatively inaccessible to twentieth-century scholars until the late 1960s, when publishers began reprinting some of this literature, but most of it was by and about black men. Although works by a few women were republished, it was not until the late 1980s that some of the literature by lesser known black females, such as Elizabeth, Mattie J. Jackson, Annie L. Burton, and Kate Drumgoold, was reprinted.

Unlike the narratives of Jacobs, Craft, and Brown, Elizabeth's account has been dictated, as the un-named transcriber indicates on the first page: "In the following Narrative of 'OLD ELIZABETH,' which was taken mainly from her own lips in her 97th year, her simple language has been adhered to as strictly as was consistent with perspicuity and propriety" (3).

Except for a few scholars who mention Elizabeth's Memoir in passing, this narrative has been virtually ignored. In The Pen Is Ours, Jean Fagan Yellin and Cynthia D. Bond identify this account as a dictated narrative. In the Introduction to Six Women's Slave Narratives, William L. Andrews classifies it as a slave narrative and spiritual autobiography.

[2] The narrowness of this scope may be explained, in part, by the fact that when she published her narrative, the emancipation process had already begun.

[3] In Slave Testimony, John W. Blassingame notes that black women wrote less than twelve percent of the extant slave narratives and that fugitives wrote about thirty-five percent of all accounts. Unfortunately, he does not specify whether the latter group includes only those who were fugitives when they published their narratives or whether it includes all of those slave narrators who at some time in their lives were fugitives, such as Harriet Jacobs.

[4] In Black Culture and Black Consciousness, Lawrence W. Levine observes that during times of transfiguration, slave converts typically saw God and Christ and talked with them. Speaking of these divine meetings, they have said such things as, "'I heard a voice from God saying, My little one, be not afraid for lo! I am with you always.'" "'I seen Christ with His hair parted in the center.'" "'I saw Him when He freed my soul from Hell.'" "'I saw in a vision a snow-white train once and it moved like lightning. Jesus was on board and He told me He was the Conductor'" (36-37).

[5] Labelling the Memoir as a "traditional spiritual autobiography," Joycelyn K. Moody asserts that Elizabeth diminishes her identity by placing God at the center of her account. One may, however, read Elizabeth's narrative

positioning of God as a move to *enlarge* her own sense of self, showing herself to be a child of God.

[6] See Joanne M. Braxton's chapter "Fugitive Slaves and Sanctified Ladies: Narratives of Vision and Power" (39-79) for examples of how spiritual autobiographies by African-American women reveal and satisfy their quests for self-definition and self-determination.

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