

**WRITING AS SELF-CREATION:
NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS**

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Within the context of Afro-American literature, slave narratives have attracted a great deal of attention in recent criticism due to the fact that they represent the origins of the desire to search for an appropriate and accurate vehicle to portray the reality of black identity, in opposition to another corpus of texts that openly debase this identity. This desire can be considered the driving force in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, which undertakes the exploration of this theme as subject-matter: the ex-slave Douglass recounts his transition from the slave status to freedom as a kind of “rite of passage” which would result in the creation of a new self, a new identity. Douglass’ attainment of freedom and subsequent self-creation would be mainly achieved by means of the use of certain literary strategies that emphasize the importance of writing in general as the only means for the slave both to overcome his social status of bondage and to acquire a true sense of self.

Within the context of Afro-American literature, slave narratives occupy a central role, not only because they represent the origins of a kind of literature whose main concern is the portrayal of a unique conscience, that of Afro-Americans, but also because they spring forth as the need to counteract a certain set of negative and racist images. This two-fold function is certainly applicable to the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, published in 1845, which undertakes the exploration of the implications that Douglass’ attainment of freedom would possess in relation to the white dominant society of the time. The fact that the ex-slave Douglass achieves this freedom —physical and mental— through the use of a series of literary strategies emphasizes the meaning and import of writing in general as the only means for the slave to overcome his social status of bondage and to acquire a true sense of self.

Because of the influence of the historical context as a shaping force in this process of liberation, a brief introduction is deemed necessary in order to understand the importance it bears with respect to the nature of slave writings in general and Douglass' narrative in particular. After it, the analysis of the narrative itself would follow the basic development of what the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep has termed "rite of passage".¹ Following this critic, this development would consist of three major sections that correspond roughly to the three stages of any "rite of passage": separation, transition and incorporation. Finally, this vision of the tripartite structure of Douglass' rite of passage would lead to some considerations about the function of writing as source of empowerment for the slave in order to create a common discourse universe with a very specific type of readership: the white audience to which the narrative is mainly intended.

Dealing with the historical introduction first, any account of the slave's ordeal in the New World, where he/she was brought to without his/her acquiescence or even knowledge, always seems to fall short of the crude reality that was confronted. According to Nathan Huggins, the African "exodus" was "the most traumatizing mass human migration in history".² Some statistics regarding this exodus are quite telling. From the fifteenth century until the late 1870's, "over nine million Africans were taken from the continent of their ancestors and forced into slave labor throughout the Caribbean (42%), South America (49%), North America (7%) and Europe's Old World colonies (2%)" (Mc Willie 1988, 5). Although the North American percentage does not seem to amount to much in comparison, it was there where slavery presented the most hideous and lifelong face until almost 1858, when the last slaving vessel landed with its human cargo near Brunswick, Georgia.

¹ The notion of rite of passage in this analysis comes primarily from Arnold Van Gennep's well-known study *The Rites of Passage* (1960) and Victor Turner's interpretation of it in *The Ritual Process* (1977). Basically Van Gennep defines rites of passage as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position or age" (1960, 11), that is, every single transition in an individual's social existence is marked by these rites that delimit its nature and boundaries.

² Although the studies concerning this historical period have proliferated over the last decade, I find Edward M. Jackson's first chapter in *American Slavery and the American Novel 1852-1977* (1987) a good introduction and summary of it. Nathan Huggins is cited in this chapter.

A comprehensive research on the actual conditions and far-reaching effects that slavery may have had on later Afro-American psychological, social and literary making goes far beyond the purposes of the present analysis. However, any serious involvement in the subject needs to take it into account in order to make sense of its literary tradition, whose heart lies at the survival skills that were developed by the slaves to counteract slavery and its aftermath, and it is particularly revealing as far as the sources of Douglass' narrative are concerned: the outcome of slavery consisted primarily of the institutional attempt on the part of the slaveholders to strip the slave of any past bond that would still link him/her to his/her already lost community.

In so doing, this institution almost acquired a pseudo-ritualistic character which connects very specifically the so-called "Middle Passage" to an unwilling "rite of separation" on the reluctant slave's part. As Judith Mc. Willie has suggested:

An individual might be separated from his indigenous community in Africa, sold several times before leaving the old World, traded to a broker in the West Indies, only to be re-sold to a planter in Georgia or South Carolina. The system of degradation and abuse endured by these men and women, as they were brought through the slaving corridors of the Middle Atlantic, was aimed at shattering indigenous languages, religions, social hierarchies, and ancestral fidelities (1988, 5).

From this passage it follows that the real intention behind the Middle Passage with its several intermediate stages was precisely that: to completely alienate the individual from his/her community of origin in a forced "rite of separation" that would eradicate any vestige of identity/identification based on a previous knowledge of the world. This total erasure would prepare the individual for a process of acculturation/assimilation to the "new community". Nevertheless, this last process was systematically prevented by certain slaving strategies that would perpetuate the slave's condition as that of an outcast, an outsider.

This absolutely conscious effort on the master's part to hinder the slave's entrance into the new world would, consequently, be the main focus of slave narratives, which undertook the depiction of this brutal experience. In fact, the lack of deep and detailed description of the "Middle

Passage” period seems to signal exactly that: the early author’s crucial investment in portraying the slave’s situation once he set foot on American soil as his/her utmost “liminality”.³

As the critic Gates affirms: “The slave, by definition, possessed at most a liminal status within the human community. To read and to write was to transgress this nebulous realm of liminality” (1988, 128). This passage is very significant because it already proposes a model for the understanding of this early production. In the first place, it establishes the status quo of the slave within the “human=white” community very transparently: he is the absence, in every single sense of the term, including the absence of actual voice. Secondly, and a direct consequence of this racist assumption, the slave by means of literacy can therefore challenge and oppose this racist ideology.

Perhaps the best known slave narrative, the 1845 Douglass’ work, provides the perfect framework to portray the liminal status of the slave, due to the fact that most of it has to do with the protagonist’s life while in bondage. Actually, the only mention of any relation to Africa appears briefly in the title: “An African slave”. Moreover, he was already born into bondage, as he confirms in the very first sentence that opens the novel: “I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county” (Gates 1987, 255). This means that the “Middle Passage trauma” is altogether avoided. This evasion has great implications as far as the protagonist’s shaping of character is concerned: there is no memory whatsoever of any previous affiliation, so the character stands for the “real Afro-American experience of slavery”, as it were.

This Afro-American experience is narrated as a simple autobiography from Douglass’ enslaved infancy to his adulthood in freedom. Basically, he recounts many incidents that take place under the auspices of what came to be known as the “peculiar institution”: cruelty, bloodshed, hypocrisy, . . . that ultimately lead to his escape to New York in September 1838. Before that, though, he draws what seems to be an overall picture of the actual conditions of slaves in general, both on the plantation

³ I have used the term as prompted by Turner: “liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, . . .” (1977, 95). The main attributes of the liminal period are, then, ambiguity and anonymity, because it lies outside any possible definite social categorization. The individual remains in a transitional space, an “in-between” territory because he/she actually wavers between two worlds.

and in the city, going from the most vengeful “nigger-breaker” to a more “liberal” master that even allows him to learn a trade and hire himself out.

This rather comprehensive representation has yet a very singular effect: it states that slavery has the “inevitable tendency to brutalize every noble faculty of man” (1987, 248) everywhere and regardless of the conditions, as Douglass takes pains in describing. This brutalizing and dehumanizing character of slavery is easily traced back to the effect that the “Middle Passage” slaving corridors may have had on the slave, as above mentioned in this analysis. Although Douglass himself does not suffer the traumatizing experience of the “Middle Passage”, the almost immediate recognition of a link between these two states places him, right from the beginning, in the same liminal status in which the former captured slaves found themselves on their arrival to America: deprived of any sense of roots or community, he feels lost in a society that excludes him completely.

There are some clear indications of this “outsider condition” in the very first pages of the novel. In fact, the second sentence of the narrative already prefigures this: “I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it” (1987, 255). With this one sentence Douglass manages to underscore his separation from the white community both because of his degraded condition as a slave and, especially, because of his lack of literacy,⁴ which is here related to the lack of any literate documentation of his existence.

This missing knowledge makes him very different from the “white children” in possession of such evidently precious information, so his quality of a “separate entity” from the rest is already present: “I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same knowledge” (1987, 255). This sense of estrangement keenly felt by the child Douglass is made more explicit in the account of his familial lineage that follows, which sets a clear contrast between the mother “of a darker complexion” and the “white man” who supposedly was his father. Thus he combines within himself the forces of liminality par excellence: the slave status, which is already liminal by itself, and the uncertainty that usually accompanies the so-

⁴ The term “literacy” includes both possible definitions: at a primary level, it literally means the slave’s ability to read and write; later in the analysis, it is employed to represent the slave’s “literariness”, the literary strategies that allow his/her self-representation as a suitable literary subject within the white dominant discourse.

called “products of miscegenation”, category to which Douglass undoubtedly belongs. In this sense, Douglass functions from the very outset of the book as a trope for “sublime liminality”.

In the presentation of the character some very important themes have been outlined: First of all, that bondage is ultimately the outcome of the negation of humanity to those subjected to it and that it is inextricably connected to illiteracy in the case of the slaves (the sole possession of white skin upsets this equation according to the racist ideology). This bond is a revelation for the character, as he explains: “I now understood what had been a most perplexing difficulty-to wit, the white man’s power to enslave the black man . . . From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom” (1987, 275). So the slavery-freedom dichotomy is equated to the journey from orality to literacy in this text: Douglass consciously learns how to read and write in order to appropriate the discursive strategies of the white dominant culture and thus overcome his liminal social status.

Secondly, the narrative presents itself as a Bildungsroman, a voyage of self-discovery of the character which, once more, ties him to the liminality theme. Douglass’ growth process is then two-fold: as in the case of any other human being, it involves his personal search for maturity and his adaptation to the changing circumstances that surround him; however, because of his condition of slave, this process becomes something else: in the racist code, the slave is often identified by the master with a child he is responsible for and in charge of. Douglass has to free himself from this burden to be taken for an adult.

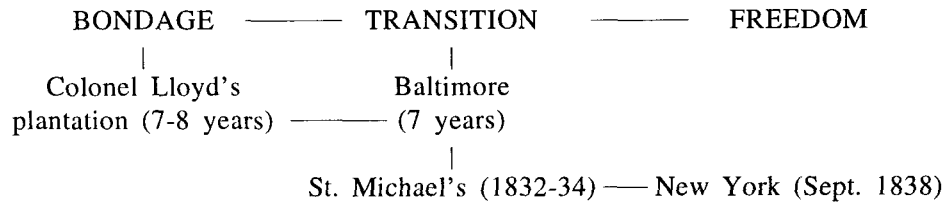
Therefore, the social institutionalization of literacy as the visual mark of reason and maturity and, hence, the certificate for humanity, is the path chosen by the child-slave to attain his freedom. The task undertaken by Douglass in his narrative can be thus defined in terms of his deep investment in Western literacy to overcome his liminality in relation to the white community, in the sense that he is very aware of the importance of writing as proof of his human potential. From this standpoint, the entire narrative can be interpreted as an extensive “rite of passage”, whose three stages are clearly marked by both direct and indirect allusions in the text.

Moreover, these three stages have to do with another recurrent topic in the Bildungsroman that is widely used in the realm of Afro-American literature: the insistence on geographical movement as symbolic of interior states in the individual. That is to say, an outer sign, the idea of

movement and mobility in general, is taken to represent and disclose the innermost feelings of the individual, of the slave in this case. Taking this criterion into consideration, Douglass' rite can be divided into: plantation years, the transitional stage he undergoes both in Baltimore and St. Michael's and the final initiation to a new life in New York.

The choice of Baltimore and St. Michael's as transitional steps within his slavery experience has been suggested, partly, by internal evidence that regards both of them as "milder forms" of slavery when compared to the plantation life, but this argument will be taken up in more detail later on. It is clear, though, that the plantation and New York configure the two poles around which the narrative itself evolves, and it would not be too far-fetched to consider the plantation the prime cause that brings about the rest of the events.

A small explanatory chart would look as follows:



Dealing then first with the plantation years, two images seem to stand out straight away. The first one is the complete absence of movement to describe the still life of the slaves and, symbolically, their lack of freedom; and the second one, intimately connected to the previous issue, is the overwhelming "presence of silence" in its different forms, which is diametrically opposed to the quest for literacy that takes place in the second phase.

The scene that opens up the depiction of what slavery is like on the plantation is found in chapter one, when the character witnesses his aunt's whipping: "It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant . . . It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass" (1987, 258). The language used to account for this scene is markedly endowed with a quasi-ritual character provided by the employment of biblical vocabulary. This kind of language aims at demonstrating both

the author's intellectual and moral capacities because of his familiarity with the Bible, which becomes, together with writing, another resource for empowerment.

It is also noticeable the sense of hopelessness and fate the author conveys in his tale of what seems to be a "perfect" rite of separation, further reinforced by the placement of a set of images that have to do with lack or absence of movement. The natural reaction after witnessing the disturbing scene is to hide himself: "I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction was over" (1987, 259). The symbolic use of the closet is widespread in slave narratives of the time, perhaps the most compelling instance is Harriet Jacobs' autobiography, in which she hides herself in a garret for seven years in order to escape her master's sexual attacks (Gates 1987).

The employment of the trope of confinement defines very specifically the slave's experience as a man outside the social bond, recognized as the "other". This consciousness allows for a great accumulation of images denoting a circumscribed space in the first part of the work: the description of the plantation house and the farm as a prison, the "tarred" garden that explicitly stands for prohibition for the slaves and, finally, the slave circle in which Douglass visualizes himself: "I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear" (1987, 263).

The sense of immobility is emphasized by another cluster of images that pinpoint at the slave's inability to "speak his own mind", to define or create himself by means of the spoken or written word. Because of this inability, the other sign of liminality, silence, is foregrounded here. As Turner puts it: "In tribal societies, speech is not merely communication but also power and wisdom" (1977, 103). The powerless slave is signalled in the text by the lack of control over language on his part.

Actually, he is forced to lie in order to preserve his life: "The frequency of this [master striking slaves for telling the truth] has had the effect to establish among the slaves the maxim, that a still tongue makes a wise head" (1987, 266). Obviously "trickery" is also a survival technique, a way of regaining this lost control, but it springs from an external pressure that denies the slave the possibility of expressing himself freely.

Another feature related to the void of voice (identified with illiteracy in the text) is this part's emphasis on orality, in this case on slave songs: "they told a tale of woe . . . every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains" (1987, 263). In this passage the message of the songs seems to reflect very closely that of the narrative itself in its opposition to slavery, which certifies the existence of a continuum between orality and literacy that is developed further in the second stage.

This second phase —the transitional or liminal period proper— occupies most of the narrative and is discussed in great detail by the narrator. This fact itself seems to automatically denote the essentiality of this stage to achieve a balanced judgment of the case in point: slavery. Although the plantation life is regarded as liminal with respect to the slave's indefinite social position, now direct markers of transition appear undeniably clear in the text. For example, when Douglass describes his feelings at his departure from the plantation, he affirms: "I left it with joy . . . I received this information about three days before my departure. I spent the most part of all these three days in the creek, washing off the plantation scurf, and preparing myself for my departure" (1987, 271).

The mention of washing immediately reminds the reader of the ritualistic washing and the importance of water in both separation and initiation rites. In this case it seems closer to separation, as it is explained by his following words: "I spent the time in washing, not so much because I wished to, but because Mrs. Lucretia had told me I must get all my dead skin off my feet and knees before I could go to Baltimore" (1987, 271). This passage adds more meaning to the act of washing which is thus related to the idea of liminality conceived as the nakedness of the purified body. The emphasis on bodily cleanliness prior to any change, any movement, connects once more the themes of liminality and mobility.

Along with the allusion to washing, there is another fact that deeply influences his joy, his conviction that he is not leaving anything worthwhile: "The ties that ordinarily bind children to their homes were all suspended in my case. I found no severe trial in my departure . . . it was no home to me" (1987, 271). This can be seen as the conclusion of a successful rite of separation —the novice has severed every bond with his previous way of life and is willing to plunge into a new state.

His willingness to leave is also supported by the belief that his departure is, in itself, an improvement and that the future will look brighter. This prospect is articulated in very revealing terms:

I look upon my departure from Colonel Lloyd's plantation as one of the most interesting events in my life. It is possible, and even quite probable, that the mere circumstances of being removed from that plantation to Baltimore, I should have today, instead of being here seated by my own table . . . writing this Narrative, been confined in the galling chains of slavery. Going to Baltimore laid the foundation, and opened the gateway, to all my subsequent prosperity (1987, 273).

It is highly remarkable here that the pair confinement-movement is expressed in relation to the idea of slavery at the moment when he is allowed to physically move for the first time. It is also evident that this movement is charged with connotations of possibility and freedom for both his life and the existence of his narrative. All this marks Baltimore as another territorial passage linked to the transitional stage, in which Douglass crosses the "gateway" or threshold, whose significance is explained by Van Gennep as follows: "To cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world" (1960, 20).

In fact, life offers him a much nicer look in his new place. The first oppressive burden—that of immobility—has been lifted from his shoulders. The second legacy of slavery follows quite soon too: he learns to read and write, so the long silence is finally crushed to pieces. Talking about the books he reads, he admits: "They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind and died away for want of utterance" (1987, 278). The issue of the continuum between orality and literacy is addressed again.

According to Gates, "the slaves' writings were often direct extensions of their speeches, and many ex-slave narrators confessed that their printed texts were formal revisions of their spoken words organized and promoted by anti-slavery organizations" (1988, xi). This is another instance of the way this continuum orality-literacy works. The ritualistic power of the words is not lost, there is a transference of this power from oral to written form which actually takes over in the narrative. The fact of this power attached to writing is demonstrated in a later passage in the text, when writing is used as an almost physical protection to escape.

Therefore writing itself makes it possible for the slave to empower himself against a hostile society.

However, before the escape can actually be fulfilled, several other liminal "requirements" need to be met. It seems that the three-year stay at St. Michael's serves this function. What is outstanding here is that Douglass is actually brought to his most degraded and lowest condition as a "field hand", portrayed in dramatic terms: "I was broken in body, soul and spirit . . . The dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!" (1987, 293). The last sign of his complete aloofness is presented in this passage, he has been finally turned into an animal, not worthy of being called a man anymore.

This last statement completely turns upside down the racist claim about the black man's animality, because it is only through the devastating influence of slavery that this is actually achieved. He has reached the utmost level of liminality in order to acquire the right to become a member. The intention to overcome this degradation is testified by the words he utters in his desperation: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man" (1987, 294). It seems that he is now ready to create a new identity that can be accepted by the dominant social norms.

From this moment onwards, the "powers of the weak", "the permanently or transiently sacred attributes of low status or position" (Turner 1977, 109), come in. For the first time, he stands his ground in the battle against his master, a moment that becomes the turning-point in his life described in the following religious-like phrases: "It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom" (1987, 299). The term "resurrection" is in sharp opposition to the death that is usually part of the transitional rite. Again he makes use of biblical imagery to emphasize the rupture with the previous stage and to indicate his newly-found individual power.

It is due to this experience that the possibility of the existence of a community is taken seriously for the first time too and this community is insistently and necessarily linked to literacy as a means for freedom: ". . . I must keep my Sabbath school. I agreed to do so, and accordingly devoted my Sundays to teaching these my loved fellow-slaves how to read" (1987, 303). However, the betrayal within this community reminds him once more that community and liminality do not go hand in hand. As Turner explains, "communitas" cannot exist if the liminal condition is not overcome (1977, 96).

It seems that he still needs some more preparation before being initiated, he has to taste what independence is like before actually possessing it, he must assimilate more to be able to fit in. This is a suitable explanation for his return to Baltimore and his hiring himself: “while I endured all the evils of a slave, suffered all the care and anxiety of a freeman. I found it a hard bargain. But, hard as it was, I thought it better than the old mode of getting along. It was a step towards freedom” (1987, 318-9). This last phase in which he becomes somewhat independent seems to complete the circle opened up in the same city years ago. He now seems to be prepared to face freedom and it is at this moment, in which his liminality vanishes, that he decides to escape and succeeds.

The rest of the narrative deals with his “new life” in New York, marked by evident rites of incorporation such as marriage and re-naming. Focusing firstly on marriage, it is described by Gennep as follows: “To marry is to pass from the group of children or adolescents into the adult group” (1960, 124). Not surprisingly at all, the wedding ceremony in Douglass’ account is reduced to the certificate that appears enclosed on p. 321, thus reiterating the power of writing to give a sense of truth and reality to the ex-slave’s existence. It creates and consecrates Douglass’ new identity as a literate one, in sharp contrast to the undocumented child of the beginning of the novel.

The second incorporation rite that is explained is that of naming, or re-naming in this case. This rite is seen by Gennep as follows: “When a child is named, he is both individualized and incorporated into society” (1960, 62). This is Douglass’ own comment about it: “I gave Mr. Johnson the privilege of choosing me a name, but told him he must not take from me the name of ‘Frederick’. I must hold on to that, to preserve a sense of my identity” (1987, 322). Undoubtedly, one of the most clarifying analysis of the importance of naming in Afro-American literature is found in Benston’s article, in which he states that “Douglass becomes a model of consciousness as self-named, the name helping the self achieve self-awareness, and, finally, voice” (1982, 3-11). So Douglass accomplishes a sense of self which is translated in terms of his finally possessing an individual voice. The act of creation is thus over.

So far everything seems to indicate that the rite of passage has been successfully completed. The quest for freedom paralleled and echoed in the search for identity, for a literate self, has consequently been achieved. The Douglass encountered in the last pages of the narrative is a self-assured individual whose ability to adapt to his new life is permanently secured by his success in finding his own voice in the book. The narrative itself is then

presented as the ultimate certificate for his humanity, for his maturity and power because of the effective display of absolute control throughout it and the appropriation of certain literary strategies that confirm the author's "literariness".

As far as the issue of control is concerned, it is made obvious in different ways throughout the text. Perhaps the clearest one is his optional silence, for example when he states while relating his escape:

But before narrating any of the peculiar circumstances, I deem it proper to make it known my intention not to state all the facts connected with the transaction . . . It would afford me great pleasure indeed, as well as materially add to the interest of my narrative, were I at liberty to gratify a curiosity, which I know exists in the minds of many, by an accurate statement of all the facts pertaining my most fortunate escape. (1987, 315)

With this statement of purpose, he posits himself as being in charge by choosing not to tell certain facts, thus contrasting his previous silence as imposed by his slave status to his freedom to act and speak.

There is no consideration, however, of the external control that abolitionist societies may have had of the printed version of the text. What is revealing, though, is the fact that it is possible to view Douglass' autobiography as reader-oriented in the sense that it takes greatly into account the white readership to which it is mostly addressed. To reach this audience, Douglass employs certain literary patterns that are both conventional and innovative at the same time. Among these, the most commonly recognizable eighteenth century models are: the autobiographic form itself and the "authentication" methods that demonstrate Douglass' familiarity with standard literary conventions beyond any doubt, so that his literacy is doubly confirmed.

Dealing with the autobiographic technique, Douglass makes use of this convention to follow a tradition well-established in Afro-American letters since 1789 with the publication of *The Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Gates 1987). In this early narrative the key idea of literacy as an effective strategy of self-representation is already present. The autobiography serves, then, to invalidate any possible charges against the truthfulness of the slave's account which is hence presented as a definite proof of his actual existence and of his "literariness", that is, the narrative establishes the author's identity as a clearly literate one in the eyes of a white reader that can thus feel connected to him.

The other strategy above mentioned is found in the rather innovative “authentication” methods he uses. The critic Stepto (1991) explains them as follows:

While these documents [Preface and Letter that appear before the actual narrative] are integrated into Douglass’ tale, they remain segregated outside the tale in the all-important sense that they yield Douglass sufficient narrative and rhetorical space in which to render personal history in-and-as-literary form.

The way in which Douglass makes use of the authentication conventions of the slave narratives in order to both authenticate his narrative and attract attention towards the narrative itself as the ultimate valid text, emphasizes once more his total control, which is perhaps the sign of his efficient “passing” into another world in which he is a fully accepted member.

So writing—the narrative itself—has completed the act of creation in all the above senses: first of all, through it Douglass has perfected a new sense of self, he is neither the tamed slave, the mere object of scorn and abuse; nor is he a hesitating and searching child anymore, his humanity has been certified beyond any doubt. Secondly, writing has also served to pave the way to his integration into a new community. His successful self-representation through the conscious appropriation of a determined set of literary conventions allows him to assimilate to the mainstream culture and, by extension, to the white society finally abandoning his liminal social status.

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