

**Life Matters:**  
**a Study on the Importance of Including Frederick**  
**Douglass's *Life and Times* when Discussing his Discourse**  
**on Race and Identity in the 19th Century**

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## Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven tar for seg Frederick Douglass og hans diskurs om rase og identitet på 1900-tallet i *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Tidligere forskning har i størst grad tatt for seg utviklingen fra hans først utgave, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, til hans andre, *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Jeg argumenterer for at dette har gitt et hull i forskningen. Hvordan Douglass skriver om emner som selvstendighet, samfunn, religion, samt rollen til andre afroamerikanske personer endrer seg gjennom alle tre utgavene. Med nærlesing som metode utfører jeg en komparativ analyse som ser på effekten av endringene Douglass utfører i den tredje utgaven. I første kapittel diskuteres Douglass sin diskurs om rase og hvordan denne utvikler seg i hans siste utgave. Jeg argumenterer for at den anerkjente koblingen mellom Douglass og Benjamin Franklin ikke lenger er gjeldende i *Life*. Dette påvirker hvordan Douglass fremstiller både seg selv og andre afroamerikanere i teksten. Videre diskuterer jeg Douglass sin diskurs om identitet. Jeg ser på hvordan Douglass endrer omtalen av religion, samt hendelser hvor religion spiller en sentral rolle. Ettersom *Life* endrer fremstillingen av religion, så bryter dette med utviklingen sett i de to første utgivelsene. Med andre ord, uten Douglass sin siste utgave gis det et feilaktig bilde av hans religiøse syn. Religion er en sentral del av Douglass sin identitet og disse endringene viser hvordan han utvikler sin diskurs videre gjennom utgivelsen av den siste utgaven. Jeg konkluderer derfor med at *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* er sentral for å forstå Douglass sin fullstendige utvikling av diskurs om rase og identitet, og at den derfor burde ha en større plass i akademien.

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## Introduction

Frederick Douglass's autobiographies have been examined and analyzed by a multitude of scholars ever since Douglass published his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave: Written by Himself* (1845)<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, much of the scholarly work has explored the shift in Douglass's writing from *Narrative* to his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)<sup>2</sup> (Bennett, 2016; Fisch, 2007; Sekora, 1994). Revisiting Douglass's *Bondage*, these scholars focus on the fact that Douglass's first literary work was published under the editorial influence of his mentor, the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison (Bennett, 2016, p. 241). Garrison was the editor of the abolitionist newspaper *Liberator* and founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), as well as the leader of his abolitionist movement, the Garrisonians. These positions made Garrison a substantial influence on how the abolitionist movements in the United States went about their goal during the 1830s. Garrison and his movement mainly focused on the hypocrisy of Christian slaveholders, and that of any Christian who supported slavery. He was, however, a controversial figure in his view of how to ensure the abolition of slavery (Dumenil, 2012, p. 430). Viewing the U.S. constitution as "an agreement with hell," as well as supporting women's rights, Garrison lost followers and influence in the 1840s and 1850s. (2012, p. 431). Frederick Douglass was one of those who broke with Garrison during this period. Although he agreed with Garrison on the topics mentioned above, Douglass wanted to express his views on how to achieve the abolition of slavery without the editorial oversight of Garrison. Seeing that *Narrative* and *Bondage* are published either side of this break, the two represent Douglass's writing with and without the direct outside influence of a white editor in Garrison. Furthermore, as the two books were very successful in terms of sales and their discourse on slavery, they both

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequently from here on referred to as *Narrative*

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently from here on referred to as *Bondage*

represent Douglass at his most famous and influential (Bennett, 2016, p. 241). As scholars have revisited Douglass's second work, the view of *Bondage* has changed from the older perception, represented by literary scholar James Matlack's description:

The increasing length, loosened form, and declining literary merit of Douglass' autobiographical accounts issued in 1855, 1881, and 1892 became a sad index of the wearying struggles and frustrations of his later life (1979, p. 15)

to a completely different perception in newer scholarly works, represented by John Stauffer's description:

In many respects *My Bondage and My Freedom* is a deeper, richer book than Douglass's better-known *Narrative*. While the *Narrative* is shorter and more lyrical, *My Bondage* is a more complex, over four times as long, and politically and intellectually more compelling (2007, p. 208).

Although the newer scholarly work has acknowledged Douglass's *Bondage*, Douglass's third autobiography *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1892)<sup>3</sup> is not nearly as popular as its two predecessors and has, because of this, been disregarded from the newer scholarly analysis of Douglass's writing (Bennett, 2016, p. 259).

I argue, however, that one cannot discuss the complete development of Douglass's discourse without including a reading of *Life*. Considering the extent of years between his second version and the third one, a period of 26 years, *Life* represents a different Douglass than his earlier works. He is older and more reflective of his achievements in life. Furthermore, *Life* not only represents a different Douglass, but it also represents Douglass's writing without external influences such as the tension connected with the abolitionist movement. Unlike the Douglass in *Narrative* and *Bondage*, the Douglass in *Life* has lived through the emancipation of slavery. Thus, Douglass portrays different views and perspectives on earlier incidents in his life as the reason for depicting them no longer is to advocate the abolition of slavery. In this sense, by not including *Life* in their analysis,

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<sup>3</sup> Subsequently from here on referred to as *Life*

previous scholarly studies have missed out on the reflective, insightful, and nuanced view of Douglass in his final version.

Douglass's discourse in its entirety is, however, too broad of a topic for an in-depth study. Consequently, I view it necessary to limit the scope of my analysis. Thus, in this thesis, I argue that *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* is essential for understanding the complete development of Douglass's discourse on race and identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I will show this by exploring the development in Douglass's writing on the topics of independence and being self-made, Douglass's heritage, the role of the colored community<sup>4</sup>, Douglass's religious identity. Although Douglass's writing on these topics changes significantly from *Narrative to Bondage*, the writing in *Life* introduces further insight into Douglass's discourse on said topics.

I lay out this thesis in two chapters. First, I address *Life*'s writing on the topics of Douglass's heritage and his view on the role of the colored community, as these topics give insight into Douglass's deepened discourse on race and identity. I argue that Douglass's writing in *Life* reflects a significantly different image than in *Narrative* and *Bondage*. Douglass is viewed to resemble a "Negro Benjamin Franklin" in his narratives as he depicts himself as "Self-Made." I argue that Douglass departs from this image in *Life*, making the emphasis of his story about a colored man achieving freedom by relying on his community and not the "self." This significantly differs from the notion that Douglass achieves his freedom by echoing the story of Benjamin Franklin. Second, I address *Life*'s writing on religion. I do this as Douglass's religion is a central part of Douglass's identity. Religion is, additionally, one of the most explored topics of Douglass's writing. As Douglass goes from

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<sup>4</sup> Due to the timeperiod of Douglass's writing, I will in this thesis use outdated terms to describe African Americans. This was the terminology of the time, and seeing that more contemporary terms might suggest different meanings, I have chosen to use the old terminology in order to accurately interact with the literature.

being under abolitionist sponsorship in *Narrative* to writing freely in *Bondage*, he goes from being apologetic of anything possibly read as critiquing Christianity to a direct, confrontational critique of religion. Comparing these two versions alone, Douglass's discourse on religion expresses a very contrasting development. In *Life*, however, Douglass backtracks somewhat and portrays a more nuanced critique towards religion. Thus, the writing on religion in *Life* not only gives insight into the development in Douglass's discourse on his religious identity but also expresses why *Life* is central to understanding the complete development in Douglass's discourse as a whole. Without *Life*, Douglass's religious critique is misrepresented as becoming more critical post-*Narrative*.

To summarize, Douglass's writing on these topics in *Life* expresses notions that are either not fully developed or absent from his first two narratives. As a result, a study disregarding *Life* consequently cannot represent the complete development of Douglass's discourse on race and identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## The History of the Slave Narrative

Discussing Douglass's three versions, it is important to acknowledge the difference in editorial independence held by Douglass in each version. With the publishing of *Bondage*, Douglass changed the genre of his narrative from a slave narrative to an autobiography. While this change gave Douglass the editorial control in his last two versions, the effect of Douglass not having the same control in *Narrative* must be explored. I argue that it is problematic that *Narrative* is the canonical Frederick Douglass autobiography and not his post-Garrisonian influenced texts like *Life*. To understand the extent of why this is problematic, however, one must be familiar with the history of slave narratives. Thus, before I conduct any analysis, the development of the slave narrative must be explored.

In this part, I focus on the historical development of slave narratives, as that development is essential to the distinguishing of editorial choices in *Narrative*. In addition to looking at the historical development of slave narratives in general, I focus specifically on the American slave narrative wherever regional differences occur. I explore this historical overview of slave narratives through a variety of scholarly works. Amongst these are articles from "The Slave's Narrative" (Charles, 1991), with emphasis on James Olney's "*I Was Born*": *Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature* (1984). These are supported further by John Sekora's article *Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative* (1987), as well as by Philip Gould's *The rise, development, and circulation of the slave narrative* (2007) from "The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative" (Fisch, 2007).

The first slave narratives were penned in the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Great Britain. Following the rise of enlightenment, cultural, and philosophical changes, antislavery

movements started to form throughout Europe and the United States (Gould, 2007, p. 11).

Philip Gould lays forth three of the reasons for such change:

The historian David Brion Davis has identified three of them. One was the rise of secular social philosophy, based on humanitarian principles and contractual terms for human association and government, found in such thinkers as Baron Montesquieu and John Locke, which drastically narrowed the traditional Christian rationale for slavery as the natural extension of the “slavery” of human sin. Another important development was the rise of sentimentalism in the eighteenth century, which, related to evangelical religion, popular fiction, and urban cultures of refinement, raised the importance of the virtues of sympathy and benevolence as well as the cultural refinement accompanying them. A third development, especially important in the 1790s, was the proliferation of more radical and revolutionary ideas about natural rights vis-à-vis state and social forms of authority (2007, p. 11).

As Christian and political organizations needed a platform for these new ideas, the first slave narratives emerged, advocating for the abolition of the slave trade (Gould, 2007, p. 11). Based on the reason the slave narrative came to be, it is natural that Christianity was a central theme in these early slave narratives. One example of this is the narrative often identified as the first slave narrative: *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man* (1760).

Focusing on the transition from the “Indian captivity” stories, Frances Foster discusses Hammon’s narrative in her article *Briton Hammon’s Narrative: Some Insights Into Beginnings* (1977). Although there are details to Hammon’s story making it unfit of the term “slave narrative,” it still focused on themes central to what would become the slave narrative: “With the publication of Briton Hammon’s narrative in 1760, the first narrative by a Black Indian captive exists, Afro-American prose is born and the way paved for the appearance of slave narratives” (Foster, 1977, p. 186). Reflecting a trend central to most of the Afro-American penned stories that would follow, Hammon molds his story to fit the form which his audience has created and deems acceptable (1977, p. 185). It is, however, the Christian attributes which Hammon attaches to himself that advocate the view of his story as the first slave narrative. Hammon’s narrative is a first-person account, describing the life-events of an

individual depicting himself as exemplary. Being exemplary, Hammon's journey through suffering, ending in deliverance, is portrayed as proof of God's mercy towards those who stay faithful while enduring hardship. As he is black, Hammon's narrative breaks from the traditional Indian captivity story. Instead, he becomes the first black protagonist whom, through his exemplary belief in God endures inhumane and anti-Christian conditions and is rewarded by God for maintaining his Christianity with getting his humanity back (1977, pp. 185-186).

Although Hammon uses the Indian captivity narrative as a template for his story, there was no predominant genre for narratives in this early period. Narratives were published within a wide range of genres, such as spiritual autobiography, conversion narrative, providential tale, and Indian captivity narrative (Gould, 2007, p. 13). Nevertheless, although there was no restriction on the genre which a slave narrative had to be written within in this early period, common for all was the topic of Christianity. One such narrative following the same template as Hammon's story is *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself (1789)*. Equiano's narrative was at the time the most famous slave narrative, and in his introduction, one can see the Christian influence:

By the horrors of that [slave] trade was I first torn away from all the tender connexions [*sic*] that were naturally dear to my heart; but these, through the mysterious ways of Providence, I ought to regard as infinitely more than compensated by the introduction I have thence obtained to the knowledge of the Christian religion... (Equiano, 2001, p. 41).

Although Christianity is one of several aspects in focus in Equiano's narrative, the emphasis on Equiano's ability to stay a "true Christian" in the face of adversity indicates the influence of Hammon's template. A critic of Equiano's narrative at the time of publishing focuses on exactly this aspect in his review:

The sable author of these volumes appears to be a very sensible man; and he is, surely, not the less worthy of credit from being a convert to Christianity. He is a Methodist; and has filled many pages, toward the end of his work, with accounts of his dreams,

visions, and divine impulses; but all this, supposing him to have been under any delusive influence, only serves to convince us that he is guided by principle; and that he is not one of those poor converts who, having undergone the ceremony of baptism, have remained content with that portion, only, of the Christian Religion: instances of which are said to be almost innumerable in America, and the West-Indies (Charles, 1991, p. 5).

The focus on Christianity in these early narratives further reflects the influence wielded by the sponsoring political organizations on these texts. Behind every slave narrative written, white literary tradition dictated the forms within which the slave narrative had to confine itself. The stories had to be written plainly, emphasizing the factuality of the story, and stressing otherness between, at this time, Christians and non-Christians (Sekora, 1987, p. 488). The otherness is especially highlighted in stories such as Hammon's, being written as Indian captivity stories. The focus is not on Hammon being black, but on him being a Christian protagonist, captured by non-Christians, who persists and regains his freedom due to his trust in God (Foster, 1977, p. 181). As a result, the Christian theme in the early slave narratives must be attributed to their sponsorships: "As William L. Andrews suggests, the lives of exceptional slaves were recorded if and only if they were in all other important respects conformable to popular and familiar patterns of Anglo-American literary form" (Sekora, 1987, p. 492).

Upon entering the 19<sup>th</sup> century, demands for political change concerning the question of slavery started to increase in the United States. Seeing that slave narratives could be used as a tool for political change, abolitionist movements became the primary sponsors of slave narratives in America (Gould, 2007, p. 18). This change in sponsorship would move the slave narratives away from having "Indians" as the non-Christians. The abolitionists, calling for the immediate emancipation of slaves in the American South, instead made the slaveholders the non-Christians or in more correct terms, "false" Christians (Olney, 1984, p. 50). Slaves then, persisting through their faith, get their freedom in the pious North. Further expressing the development since Hammon's story, the focus of these stories focused heavily on the racial

aspect. The increasing influence of the abolitionist movements led to the establishment of a standardized slave narrative genre in America (Gould, 2007, p. 12). With the slave narratives becoming a political tool in America, focus on detailed depictions of the daily life of slaves became central to the antebellum slave narrative. The politicizing created several requirements from the readers and publishers of the slave narratives, such as dates and specific geographic locations, as these were used as evidence of authentication (Gould, 2007, p. 19).

As a consequence of the abolitionists starting to use the narratives as empirical proof of the horrors of slavery, pro-slavery societies started to attack the slave narratives. Through claims of fabricated slave narratives, the pro-slavery societies attempted to discredit the authenticity of abolitionist-sponsored narratives (Bennett, 2016, p. 245). This new requirement of the abolitionist movements, having to verify the content of the narratives, heavily influenced slave narratives going into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This influence expressed itself in many ways, one of which is the evolution of slave narratives' titles. One example of this is the title of George White's slave narrative: *A Brief Account of the Life, Experiences, Travels, and Gospel Labours of George White, an African. Written by himself and Revised by a Friend* (1810). With his statement of having written the story himself, White was the first slave born in America to include this in the title of his narrative (Sekora, 1987, p. 491). This statement was introduced to the title of slave narratives as a direct means to counter the claims of fabrication by pro-slavery advocates (Olney, 1984, p. 52). White's statement is, however, not only an example of how the abolitionist movement countered the claims of fabrication. As the title states, White's narrative was still "Revised by a Friend." The narratives continued to be either recorded, edited, reviewed, or verified by a white abolitionist sponsor, not allowing for unaltered narratives. As a result, "Written by Himself" became a symbol of the abolitionist facade regarding slave narratives. Meanwhile, the literary confinement of slave narratives

continued as before, reinforcing the view stated by William Andrews: “the lives of exceptional slaves were recorded if and only if they were in all other important respects conformable to popular and familiar patterns of Anglo-American literary form” (Sekora, 1987, pp. 492, 495).

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, the slave narrative continued to evolve, becoming more extended, with a more advanced vocabulary and new philosophical and social attitude. Though the vocabulary of slave narratives was developing, it could not exceed what abolitionists seemed fit for a former slave (Sekora, 1987, pp. 493-494). Neither could the slave writing the narrative advocate any philosophy or social changes that collide with the abolitionist agenda. This point was famously addressed by Douglass in *Bondage* when he describes a conversation with John Collins, the general of the Massachusetts anti-slavery society: “‘Give us the facts,’ said Collins, ‘we will take care of the philosophy.’” (1969, p. 361). Ensuring that the slave narratives only dealt in facts favorable to the agenda decided upon by the white abolitionists, the movements had by the 1830s designed what Olney names the “Master Plan for Slave Narratives,” a list containing 17 bullet points on what a slave narrative was to include. Amongst those points is the already mentioned inclusion of “Written by Himself” in the title, along with such as the narrative starting with “I was born,” descriptions of religious slaveholders being the worst amongst slaveholders, accounts of slave auctions separating families, and the taking of a new last name suggested by a white abolitionist (1984, pp. 50-51).

Continuing the abolitionist movements’ work to ensure that their publications could face the claims of fabrication by the pro-slavery societies, strictly ascribing to a set template ensured this. The importance of this authenticity, as focused on by William L. Andrews, is emphasized by John Sekora: “Not black storytelling but white authentication made for usable narratives” (1987, p. 497). Further emphasizing the abolitionists focus on authenticity rather

than the slave's own stories, Sekora points out that some abolitionists viewed their role as central to the slave narrative: "black agents had no stories until the abolitionists gave them one" (1987, p. 498). With this focus in mind, Olney's list becomes a showcase of the already mentioned confinement put on slave narratives by the abolitionist movement. It was already determined what a slave's story should be, and it was the task of the abolitionists to find stories that would fit that template. In other words, the "Master Plan for Slave Narratives" was developed to shed light on the problems within the institution of slavery, as seen by the abolitionists. This did not necessarily express the problems as the individual slave viewed them. This distinction is essential as it further emphasizes how the abolitionists' political motivation affected the slave narratives.

In their continued efforts to advocate the abolition of slavery, the abolitionist movements began organizing meetings where former slaves would tell their narrative. With this development, the oratory skills of a former slave became more important than his written words. The slave narrative continued to influence readers in areas where meetings never took place. However, in principle, the narrative was now to function as a manuscript for the former slave telling his story. The speaker would shape the story to fit the audience, while the written narrative ensured that the story told at the abolitionist meetings, in essence, always stayed the same (Sekora, 1987, p. 501). The need for this came as lecturers such as Douglass himself, being one of the most famous speakers, saw that the audience returned to hear their stories again and again. To withstand the pro-slavery societies continued claims of fabricated stories, the abolitionists had to ensure that the story did not differ when the audiences returned. Additionally, Douglass noticed that while the audiences at first came to be informed, they returned in order to be moved (Sekora, 1987, p. 501). This notion confirmed the abolitionist's emphasis on oratory skills and its ability to move audiences differently than what the written narrative could. Consequently, the ending of the written slave narratives became standardized

to fit this use. As can be seen in Douglass's *Narrative*, the slave narrative was to end with an introduction to the antislavery community and lecturing, bringing the story full circle:

But, while attending an anti-slavery convention at Nantucket, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 1841, I felt strongly moved to speak, and was at the same time much urged to do so by Mr. William C. Coffin, a gentleman who had heard me speak in the colored people's meeting at New Bedford... ..I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I desired with considerable ease. From that time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren... (2014, p. 66).

The abolitionist influence did, however, not restrict itself to defining the end of the slave narratives. With the slave narrative being the manuscript of the lecturer, the lecturer could answer questions, modifying the story for different audiences, but he had to tell the same story each time (Sekora, 1987, p. 501).

As indicated by Olney's "Master Plan of Slave Narratives" with its list of what a slave narrative was to include, there is a clear connection between the questions asked and the content of the speakers' narratives. The literary confinement that the abolitionists exhibited over the written narrative is already established. With this in mind, the role of the slave narrative as a manuscript for the lecture further shows how the slaves were confined in their speech as well. Sekora illustrates this using the well-established concept of the white envelope:

The beginnings and endings of slaves' lives are thus institutionally bound. Put another way, the slave is witness in a double sense: eyewitness to a system that must be exposed, and witness called before abolitionist judges and jurors to reply to specific questions – no more, no less. Once again, white sponsors compel a black author to approve, to authorize white institutional power. The black message will be sealed within a white envelope (Sekora, 1987, p. 502).

Sekora's quote deals with both the aspect of abolitionist confinement on slave narratives and the role of authentication. Thus, it sums up the development of slave narratives under the abolitionist sponsorship. At the center of the slave narrative is the white abolitionists' institutionalized view of slavery, which pushes the individual life experience of the narrator further to the edges. Just as the 18<sup>th</sup>-century narrators' path to Christianity defined their

narratives, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century narrators had to endorse the white man's solution to abolition (Sekora, 1987, p. 503).

Having shown the historical development of slave narratives, I argue that the problems with *Narrative* being Douglass's canon are apparent. Douglass was told to tell only the factual side of his story, excluding essential notions from his discourse (Douglass, 1969, p. 361). Disapproving of these restrictions concerning the expression of his thoughts, Douglass decided to separate himself from the abolitionist movement. Having parted ways with the abolitionist movement, Douglass eventually published the second version of his narrative: *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Whereas the historical context given here lays the premise for expanding Douglass's canon beyond *Narrative*, the following analysis will express why *Life* needs to be included in it.

## The Canonical Douglass and Gap in Scholarly Discussion

When Frederick Douglass explains in his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), that his white abolitionist advocates wanted only “facts” from Douglass so that they could “take care of the philosophy,” he invites us to re-think the original *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) as in part a product of William Lloyd Garrison (Blumenthal, 2013, p. 178).

With this quote, Rachel Blumenthal starts her article *CANONICITY, GENRE, AND THE POLITICS OF EDITING: How We Read Frederick Douglass*. In this article, she addresses the issue of how we should read Douglass. Considering that he has published the same story several times, she raises the question: “With such a rich archive of autobiographical materials available to us, how have we thus far chosen to read, anthologize, and canonize Douglass’s life story, and how will we do so in the future?” (2013, p. 179) This very question is the foundation of my thesis. Blumenthal argues that Douglass invites us to re-think his first autobiography with the publication of his second. I say that the same is happening when Douglass, twenty-six years later, decides to publish the third version of his narrative. Whereas *Bondage* has gained its acclamation through newer scholarly development, *Life* is still in essence left out (Levine, 2007; Stauffer, 2007). As a result, I view it to be a gap in the scholarly discussion on Douglass, partially due to *Life* being omitted from the canonical Frederick Douglass literature. I argue that without the inclusion of *Life*, one does not see Douglass’s full development on essential aspects of his narrative. Both the portrayal of colored men and the importance of being “Self-made” is significantly altered by Douglass in his final narrative. In sum, I view the advocating Blumenthal makes for the importance of *Bondage* to apply to *Life* for the very same reasons.

Blumenthal explores how *Narrative* is being introduced, read, and taught instead of Douglass’s later autobiographies, with emphasis on *Bondage* (2013, p. 179). Coinciding with Blumenthal’s statements, my first meeting with Douglass at university revolved around

*Narrative*. Connecting Blumenthal's experience with mine, she focuses on *The Norton Anthology*, which is the book that was used in my course:

The various Norton Anthologies of literature occupy our bookshelves as benchmarks of canonicity. As Gates has observed, "A well-marked anthology functions in the academy to create a tradition, as well as to define and preserve it. A Norton Anthology opens up a literary tradition as simply as opening the cover of a carefully edited and ample book" (Gates, *Loose Canons* 31). Significantly both the Norton Anthology of American Literature and the Norton Anthology of African American Literature include the full text of Douglass's 1845 *Narrative* (2013, p. 187).

Blumenthal's comments thus express how *Narrative* holds the canonical position at universities. My own experience using the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Norton Anthology: American Literature* (Baym, 2011) supports this notion. Focusing on *Narrative* and its role amongst the slave narratives, *Bondage* was mentioned with only a few chapters, and *Life* was omitted entirely from the discussion. This experience confirms the points addressed in Blumenthal's article on how *Narrative* holds the official position amongst Douglass's narratives. However, it also expresses the difference in the presence of *Bondage* and *Life* in both Norton and Blumenthal's article.

Significantly, too, both anthologies include excerpts from *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Douglass's 1855 text may not have achieved the massively popular canonicity Paul Giles's claim would suggest, but he is correct insofar as the existence of the second version is noted by such widely-used texts as the Nortons (2013, p. 187).

Norton includes *Bondage*, but not *Life*. Blumenthal's use of parenthesis further highlights the general view of *Life*:

In publishing a second (and a third) edition of his autobiography that breaks from the authenticating white editorial apparatus of the initial edition, is Douglass not inviting his readers to supplement, perhaps even replace, that first version with his updated politics, editorial policies and literary foci? (2013, p. 180).

By putting *Life* in parenthesis, Blumenthal illustrates the position Douglass's final work holds in newer scholarly work. Additionally, it also exemplifies the gap in discussion regarding Douglass's development. Leaving *Life* as a side note, I argue that Douglass's third version is not given the same position in the debate as his first two versions are. Thus, by focusing on

the indispensability of Douglass's *Life*, my thesis offers a new perspective on the development of Douglass's discourse on race and identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Blumenthal's quote does, however, demand the clarification of one final notion. Blumenthal states that Douglass has published three autobiographies. Newer scholarly works such as Nolan Bennet's discards this view. In his article, *To Narrate and Denounce: Frederick Douglass and the Politics of Personal Narrative* (2016), Bennet conducts an analysis comparing Douglass's *Narrative and Bondage*. Bennet bases his analysis on *Narrative* not being an autobiography, while *Bondage*, on the other hand, is one (Bennett, 2016, p. 242). He states that autobiographies are conceptualized on the recollection of memories. Consequently, the influence that the white editors and abolitionists have on slave narratives becomes problematic when talking about *Narrative* as an autobiography. In an autobiography, the individual author decides which events from their life to emphasize. The incidents highlighted in slave narratives, however, are determined by white sponsorship. As shown in the historical context, this is not only Bennet's view but also analyzed in-depth by Olney (Olney, 1984). I agree with Bennet in his differentiating of genres within Douglass's works, and I argue that this further advocates the inclusion of *Life* when discussing the changes in Douglass's works. Viewing *Bondage* as Douglass's first autobiography, *Bondage* represents the first of the narratives where Douglass is the one deciding which incidents to highlight. Consequently, the changes from *Bondage* to *Life* then becomes not his second edit, but rather his first. This view is of significance, as the development in Douglass's discourse then can be said actually to take place from *Bondage* to *Life*.

## Chapter one: Douglass and race

### Introduction

In this chapter, I will advocate that Douglass's narrative in *Life* distances Douglass's story from the ubiquitous notions of achieving the "American Dream" through being "Self-made." Consequently, Douglass also moves away from representing the image of "Ideal American" citizenry in *Life* as he no longer depicts himself as "Self-made." This notion is essential as recent scholarly work has focused on how Douglass creates this separation in *Bondage* (Levine, 2007, 2009). My argument, however, is that it is in *Life* that Douglass portrays a deepened detachment from this literary trope in his writing, and that this detachment profoundly affects how Douglass portrays both his identity and race throughout his narrative. As a result, I argue that *Life* offers essential insight to the development of Douglass's view on these topics. Douglass ensures this detachment both by introducing new passages in *Life* and by changing already existing passages from his previous versions. To start this chapter, I will study previous scholarly work advocating a connection between Douglass and Benjamin Franklin. Having established the elements that argue a reflection of Franklin in Douglass, I will explore how changes made in *Life* contradicts the presence of such notions. Enabling me to present these pieces of evidence, I have conducted a close reading of *Narrative*, *Bondage*, and *Life*. I will start by exploring Douglass's writing on the topic of heritage. This topic represents how *Life* introduces new information to a theme present in both of the first two versions. Following that, I will explore Douglass's passage on his escape, as this passage is present solely in *Life*. Describing his escape, Douglass takes what represents the climax of his journey as a "Self-made" man and replaces it with a dependence on other colored men. Lastly, I will explore passages where Douglass has changed his story from *Narrative* to *Bondage* but keeps it the same in *Life*. Due to the time of publishing, Douglass is free to reveal information in *Life* that he had to redact in *Narrative* and *Bondage*. Considering that Douglass can write

freely, I argue that the decision to keep parts of his story unknown to the reader is a distinct choice by Douglass. As he consciously maintains an opaqueness on certain aspects of his writing, I view this to express that Douglass no longer tailors his writing for the white audience. In sum, these changes combine to make Douglass's writing on race and identity in *Life* emphasize significantly different notions than in his first two narratives.

### **“Negro Benjamin Franklin”?**

Franklin scholar and professor J.A. Leo Lemay states in his essay *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: Franklin's Autobiography and the American Dream* that “Franklin gave us the definitive formulation of the “American Dream” (Lemay, 1978, p. 23). I argue that Douglass distances himself from Franklin and the “American Dream” in *Life*. In order to portray this break, I will first define the “American Dream” and Douglass's connection to Benjamin Franklin in *Narrative*. Describing Franklin's definition, Lemay argues that Franklin's emphasis is not on wealth. Franklin's focus is instead on “the rise from impotence to importance, from dependence to independence, from helplessness to power” (1978, p. 24). However, in his description of reaching importance, Franklin parallels it to the notion of “from rags to riches.” In doing so, Lemay views Franklin's version of the “American Dream” to reflect how the U.S. itself went through its transformation from colony to sovereign state (p. 24). Connecting the development of character to the development of the country, Franklin creates an archetypical notion connected to those who succeed in the United States. Lemay furthermore emphasizes that Franklin manifests the idea that everyone can achieve success in America (p. 25). The most important characteristic which Franklin ties to the “American Dream” is, however, that it is a philosophy of individualism. As Lemay puts it; “The *persona* has the opportunity of choosing... what he is going to do in life and what he is going to *be* in life” (p. 26). Lemay continues to give examples of choices made by Franklin, and expressing how these choices come down to being defined by or defining one's faith: “their primary

function in the *Autobiography* is to demonstrate that man does have a choice in the New World, that man can create himself” (p. 27). In other words, Franklin expresses in his *Autobiography* that being “Self-Made” is an integral part of achieving the “American Dream.” Franklin’s articulation of the “American Dream” became in its own a literary trope and would model how many slave narratives were written, including Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative* (Levine, 2007, pp. 101-102).

Rafia Zafar is another scholar who makes the connection between Douglass and Franklin. In her article *Franklinian Douglass: The Afro-American as Representative Man*, Zafar states: “The life of Douglass, in history and in print, operates as an extension and amplification of that of the ideal American set forth in Franklin’s *Autobiography*” (Zafar, 1990, p. 99). Shown by Lemay’s article, the “ideal American” in *Autobiography* is one who goes from “rags to riches,” from “impotence to importance” by creating himself. Zafar as well credits the template created by Franklin as the structure on which Douglass models his story: “To break out of the ‘social death’ of slavery, Douglass adopted the role of the self-made American man, already a powerful trope by the mid-nineteenth century” (Zafar, 1990, p. 101). Many view Douglass’s utilization of the “Self-made man” as a literary trope as the reason *Narrative* became such a popular slave narrative (Bennett, 2016, p. 248; Matlack, 1979, p. 27). To fit this trope, Douglass had to portray himself within the image of being an “ideal American.” Zafar expresses this use of the “Self-made” trope by quoting Douglass’s description of teaching himself how to write:

By this time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned to write, and had written over a number of copy-books... When left thus [alone], I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas’s copy book, copying what he had written... [A]fter a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write. (71) (p. 104).

As Douglass viewed the ability to write as a distinct pathway to his freedom, this passage reflects several aspects of Franklin’s *Autobiography*. Not only is it depicting Douglass’s

transition from “helplessness to power,” but also that “man can create himself.” Zafar emphasizes in her article that by using the template developed by Franklin, Douglass emulates Franklin in *Narrative* despite the color of his skin (Zafar, 1990, p. 99). As my thesis discusses the impact of *Life* on Douglass’s discourse on race and identity, I will focus on how Douglass’s change in writing moves *Life* away from the image of “Self-made.” This move is essential as being “Self-made” is central to the connection between *Narrative* and *Autobiography*: “The great emphasis on personal freedom, espousal of hard work and industriousness, and announcement of lowly origins are hallmarks of both works” (p. 99). Zafar further expresses the effect of Douglass’s writing reflecting Franklin:

In this earliest version of his life, Douglass plays the role of isolato [*sic*] in order to win the approbation of his largely white audience, an audience weaned on American heroes as Franklin and Andrew Jackson (1990, p. 112).

Moving away from portraying himself as “Self-made,” Douglass thus rejects this approbation. To ensure clarity within my discussion, I will be using the term “ideal American,” along with “Self-made.” As described by Zafar is Douglass’s *Narrative* operating “as an extension and amplification of that of the ideal American set forth in Franklin’s *Autobiography*” (1990, p. 99). While the move from “Self-Made” is what I am focusing on, I define being “Self-Made” as part of the “ideal American.” When Douglass deconstructs the image of being “Self-Made,” he consequently distances himself from being the depiction of the “ideal American” and Benjamin Franklin.

In his article *The Autobiographies of Frederick Douglass* (1979), James Matlack states of Douglass writing: “He echoed the businessman’s laissez-faire ethos all too readily. It was not by accident that Douglass’ most popular lecture was called ‘Self-Made Men.’” (1979, p. 27). Continuing, Matlack introduces an excerpt from *Life*: “As he noted in *Life and Times*, ‘I have sometimes been credited with having been the architect of my own fortune, and have

pretty generally received the title of ‘self-made man.’ (p. 466)” (1979, p. 27). Making one final comment on *Life*, Matlack focuses on a passage from Douglass’s conclusion:

The concluding paragraphs of his 1881 text are a homily on success, stressing the familiar Puritan virtues. ‘I have urged upon them self-reliance, self-respect, industry, perseverance, and economy.’ (p. 480) Little wonder that Alain Locke described *Life and Times* as a ‘sort of Negro edition of Ben Franklin.’ (1979, p. 27)

I will refrain from addressing Matlack’s view of Douglass’s concluding paragraphs of *Life* for now, as I will focus on this in the next chapter. However, I will address Matlack’s view of Douglass’s comments on his title as “self-made.” I will also address the concept adapted from Alain Locke of Douglass as a “Negro Ben Franklin.” Matlack takes this quote from the second to last chapter in *Life*, titled “Honor to Whom Honor” (Douglass, 2008, p. 273). I argue, however, that Matlack has taken this quote out of context. Douglass’s full sentence reads:

I have sometimes been credited with having been the architect of my own fortune, and have pretty generally received the title of a ‘self-made man;’ and while I cannot altogether disclaim this title, when I look back over the facts of my life, and consider the helpful influences exerted upon me, by friends more fortunately born and educated than myself, I am compelled to give them at least an equal measure of credit, with myself, for the success which has attended my labors in life (p. 273).

As seen by what follows Matlack’s quotation, Douglass reveals that he depended on the help of others. Douglass continues to portray the same dependence in the next sentence as well:

“The little energy, industry, and perseverance which have been mine, would hardly have availed me, in the absence of thoughtful friends, and highly favoring circumstances”

(Douglass, 2008, p. 273). Douglass’s own words in this chapter consequently portray a different image than that which scholars such as Matlack have used to examine Douglass’s discussion on identity and race. As a result, scholars view *Life* to reflect Franklin in the same way as *Narrative*: “Saunders Redding calls the third autobiography ‘the most American of American life stories” (Matlack, 1979, p. 27). I argue, however, that Douglass does not depict himself as a “Negro Ben Franklin” in *Life*. Quite the contrary, Douglass in *Life* distances

himself from the very image of Benjamin Franklin. Douglass does this to portray a different identity than in his previous works. This shift is essential as it gives a new perspective on whom Douglass wishes to identify with. The break from Franklin is, however, not only portrayed in the final parts of *Life*. Douglass makes several alterations throughout his narrative to ensure this break.

### **Breaking From the Franklinian Template by Changing the Heritage**

One example of Douglass distancing himself from the image of Benjamin Franklin in *Life* is the change he makes to his heritage. Douglass's writing conveys a connection between himself and Franklin in *Narrative*, as expressed in both Lemay and Zafar's articles. Using the "American Dream" as a literary trope, Douglass creates a bond between himself and the white Americans. To further enhance this bond, Douglass introduces his heritage. The goal of Douglass's use of heritage is thus the same as the reason for tying his own story to that of Franklin. Douglass conforms to the notion that European heritage is essential to achieve the American idea of success. Consequently, as Douglass alters his heritage in *Life*, he removes his European heritage. As a result, Douglass in *Life* removes the reliance on his European ancestry when it comes to his achievement of American citizenship.

Douglass highlights the importance of the heritage in *Narrative* by introducing it already in the third paragraph of the book: "My father was a white man... The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father" (2014, p. 12). This sentence reflects not only Douglass's heritage but also the abolitionist sponsorship of *Narrative*. As seen in James Olney's "Master Plan for Slave Narratives," is this statement one of the central aspects within sponsored slave narratives: "2. A sketchy account of parentage, often involving a white father" (Olney, 1984, p. 50). This statement thus exemplifies the influence which the abolitionists had on *Narrative*. In *Bondage*, however, Douglass attaches less emphasis on his heritage. Douglass makes this change to the emphasis portrayed as he moves the mentioning

of his heritage to the third page of *Bondage*. Seeing that Olney's "Master Plan" expresses that the account should be presented at the very beginning of a slave narrative, Douglass thus simultaneously expresses that *Bondage* is an autobiography by moving the mentioning of heritage. Although this is of importance, I will focus on the change in Douglass's knowledge of his family. Whereas Douglass in *Narrative* states that his father was a white man, he is more evasive about his heritage at the beginning of *Bondage*:

Nor, indeed, can I impart much knowledge concerning my parents. Genealogical trees do not flourish among slaves. A person of some consequence here in the north, sometimes designated *father*, is literally abolished in slave law and slave practice (1969, pp. 34-35).

In making this change, Douglass seems to move away from the heritage portrayed in *Narrative*. He has not only moved the mentioning of heritage but also removed his white parentage. Twenty pages later, however, Douglass addresses his heritage again. He first states: "I say nothing of *father*, for he is shrouded in a mystery I have never been able to penetrate." (1969, p. 51). He then follows up on the following page, stating: "My father was a white man, or nearly white. It was sometimes whispered that my master was my father" (1969, p. 52). Douglass reintroduces his white heritage to the narrative while describing how the children of white men, born of African descent, are treated as chattel by their fathers: "He may be a *freeman*; and yet his child may be a *chattel*. He may be white, glorying in the purity of his Anglo-Saxon blood; and his child may be ranked with the blackest of slaves" (p. 52). By keeping his father white, Douglass makes the reader sympathize with him. He places himself in the shoes of those he describes, making himself one of the children sold as chattel by their father. Furthermore, the reintroduction of white heritage ensures that the bond which was so influential in *Narrative* is present in *Bondage* as well. Being the son of a white man, Douglass ensures that any white father reading would sympathize with him. Although Douglass's alterations in *Bondage* does portray a different emphasis on his white heritage, Douglass does not change it completely. The change emphasizes that *Bondage* is an

autobiography, yet Douglass's separation from connecting with the white audience in *Bondage* is at most partial.

Repeating the disclaimer from *Bondage*, Douglass states in *Life*:

The reader must not expect me to say much of my family. Genealogical trees did not flourish among slaves. A person of some consequence in civilized society, sometimes designated as father, was literally unknown to slave law and slave practice (2008, p. 10).

Stating this, Douglass again indicates that he has removed his white heritage. Contrary to *Bondage*, however, Douglass upholds this removal throughout *Life*. In *Life*, Douglass follows up on the next page with: "Of my father I know nothing" (2008, p. 11), reinforcing that he is entirely without white heritage in *Life*. Furthermore, moving the notions on his heritage back to the start of his narrative in *Life*, Douglass makes the importance of his ancestry the same as it was in *Narrative*. However, while the importance attached to heritage is returned to that it was, that which he emphasizes is reversed. Whereas it is essential to Douglass in *Narrative* that the reader knows his father was white, it is essential to Douglass in *Life* that the reader knows that he is without white heritage. Coincidentally, Douglass decides to disregard the empathy he gains by having a white father in *Life*. Instead, he emphatically portrays himself as black. By altogether removing his European ancestry, Douglass takes the first step of many in *Life* to erase the connection between himself and Franklin. *Life* showing that Douglass is not similar to Franklin then becomes a testament to Douglass's success and the validity of his American citizenship not being reliant on European heritage.

As seen by Zafar's article is the connection to Franklin of great importance for Douglass, as his portrayal of himself as the "ideal American" is a crucial part of achieving the "American Dream" (Zafar, 1990). Robert Levine is another scholar who discusses Douglass's connection to Benjamin Franklin. He states in his article *The slave narrative and the revolutionary tradition of American autobiography*:

In *Bondage* [...] Douglass explores at greater length the cultural and institutional pressures that, in the racist slave culture of the United States, make it next to impossible for a black man to become a Benjamin Franklin (Levine, 2007, p. 105).

I agree with Levine in stating that Douglass explores this at greater length. However, as seen by the examples given, Douglass is not portraying himself as without whiteness in *Bondage*. By contrast, he discards entirely of his white heritage in *Life*. Therefore, I argue that Levine's argument would be more effectful if it included *Life*. One can make the same case with regards to Levine's further notions on Douglass in *Bondage*:

In the Narrative, Douglass alludes to his unknown white father; in *Bondage* he focuses more on his black mother. McCune Smith reads Douglass's account of his mother's "deep black, glossy complexion" and "native genius" as an effort to show that "for his energy, perseverance, eloquence, invective, sagacity, and wide sympathy, he is indebted to his negro blood. (Levine, 2007, p. 106)

Although Levine is correct in emphasizing McCune Smith's reading, he misses out on Douglass's increased emphasis by not including *Life*. In *Bondage*, Douglass's account of his mother follows the already discussed notion on Douglass's father. Stating: "My father was a white man, or nearly white. It was sometimes whispered that my master was my father" (1969, p. 52), Douglass indicates a prioritized focus on portraying his white heritage before his "negro blood." In *Life*, however, Douglass introduces his mother first. Coinciding with his change in heritage to "Of my father I know nothing" (2008, p. 11), Douglass in *Life* emphasizes that he is only, as McCune Smith states, "indebted to his negro blood." By focusing only on *Bondage*, Levine thus misses out on the further development Douglass makes to his discourse on identity and race in *Life*.

Levine continues to express a disregard towards *Life* as he returns to the topic of Douglass's development of identity in his article *Identity in the Autobiographies* (Levine, 2009). Although he includes *Life* in this article, his focus is on that which is new since *Bondage*: "The 1881 autobiography covers some of the same ground as the *Narrative* and *Bondage*, then provides hundreds of pages on Douglass's public activities from the 1850s to

1880” (2009, p. 39). Focusing on that which is new in *Life*, Levine again misses out on the changes which Douglass makes to his already written narrative. Seeing that Douglass’s depiction of himself as the “ideal American,” and his achievement of the “American Dream” is so influential in *Narrative*, his decision to stop using these literary tropes is significant. As shown by the examples given in this subchapter, I argue that Douglass erases any European heritage as he removes his white father. In doing so, Douglass enhances that one does not have to have European ancestry to be successful in America. Additionally, Douglass also states that one does not have to have European ancestry to be an American. In doing so, Douglass makes his story a template to follow for colored people. Preceding *Life*, Douglass’s path to being a true American is by copying the path of Franklin, including his European descent. In *Life*, Douglass emphasizes that African descent does not make his achievement any less legitimate.

### **Breaking From the Franklinian Template by Emphasizing the Multidimensional Function of Community**

Depicting the escape in *Life*, Douglass highlights how members of the colored community are multifaceted, both those free and those enslaved. This portrayal of colored deviates from the traditional representation at the time. The traditional slave narrative had to depict slaves as the society in general perceived them. As Olney writes: “The writer of a slave narrative finds himself in an irresolvably tight bind as a result of the very intention and premise of his narrative, which is to give a picture of ‘slavery *as it is*.’” (1984, p. 48). The author could not deviate from the standard, as that would question the authenticity of his narrative.

Additionally, as the slave narrative revolves around one slave being extraordinary, the rest had to be the opposite (p. 49). Douglass moves away from this in *Life*, allowing for other extraordinary colored characters in his narrative. Doing so, *Life* gives another example demonstrating how Douglass in *Life* distances his story from the template set by Benjamin

Franklin. Similar to the role of the slave narrative, Franklin portrays his success through the notion of being extraordinary. By being “Self-made.” As the escape symbolizes Douglass’s achievement of the “American Dream,” it directly affixes Douglass’s journey to Franklin’s. However, in describing his escape in *Life*, Douglass dismantles this connection.

In his *Autobiography*, Franklin describes the central aspects to become an “ideal American” and achieving the “American dream.” Through his “bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection” (Franklin, 1948, p. 73), Franklin illustrates that you will reach your goals if you work hard. Focusing on thirteen moral virtues, Franklin aimed to fix one at a time, and eventually become morally perfect. Describing how this embodied the spirit of the “ideal American,” Franklin states that: “by clearing successively my lines of their spots, till in the end, by a number of courses, I should be happy in viewing a clean book, after a thirteen week’s daily examination” (p. 77). Franklin did not manage to obtain moral perfection as he was preoccupied with other endeavors. However, as Franklin states:

...that it was, therefore, every one’s interest to be virtuous who wished to be happy even in this world; and I should, from this circumstance ... have endeavored to convince young persons that no qualities were so likely to make a poor man’s fortune as those of probity and integrity (p. 82).

Summarizing the concept of being the “ideal American,” Franklin, at the same time, emphasizes the characteristics of being “Self-Made.” It is through your own decision to work hard and to be dedicated that one achieves the “American Dream.” With Franklin’s focus on what makes a man “Self-made” in mind, Douglass’s changes to the description of his escape are of great interest.

Douglass’s change of heritage expresses how recent scholars have limited their discussion on Douglass’s discourse by not including *Life*. These limitations are further evident when looking at Douglass’s escape from slavery. The first notion of importance when discussing Douglass’s escape is that *Narrative* and *Bondage* have different conditions for

their descriptions of Douglass's escape than *Life*. Written in 1845 and 1855, slavery is still a legal and lawful practice during the publication of his first two versions. Consequently, Douglass does not want to endanger anyone who, in one way or another, partook in his journey. Nor does he want to give away his route, taking away the opportunity for other slaves to reach freedom as he did. Douglass expresses this reason for leaving out any descriptions in *Narrative*:

I left my chains, and succeeded in reaching New York without the slightest interruption of any kind. How I did so, - what means I adopted, - what direction I travelled, and by what mode of conveyance, - I must leave unexplained, for the reasons before mentioned (2014, p. 61).

Douglass gives the same disclaimer in *Bondage*: "How I got away – in what direction I traveled – whether by land or by water; whether with or without assistance – must, for reasons already mentioned, remain unexplained" (1969, p. 334). However, in the 26 years between *Bondage* and *Life*, the United States abolished slavery. As a result, Douglass is free to give an account of his escape in *Life*. No one can question Douglass's reasoning behind keeping his journey to freedom a secret in his first two versions. These reasons, however, simultaneously express the importance of including *Life*. Douglass's description of the escape distances the narrative from portraying the importance of following the Franklinian template. Instead, Douglass is using the escape to portray the capacities of colored men other than himself.

Being able to tell more than in the first two versions, Douglass wants to satisfy the reader's curiosity in *Life*:

The abolition of slavery in my native state and throughout the country, and the lapse of time, render the caution hitherto observed no longer necessary... I shall now, however, cease to avail myself of this formula, and, as far as I can, endeavor to satisfy this very natural curiosity (2008, p. 112).

Following this declaration, Douglass goes on to describe how slaves undertook the journey to freedom:

This device of slaveholding ingenuity, like other devices of wickedness, in some means defeated itself – since more than one man could be found to answer the same general description. Hence many slaves could escape by personating the owner of one set of papers; and this was often done as follows: A slave nearly or sufficiently answering the description set forth in the papers, would borrow or hire them till he could by their means escape to a free State, and then, by mail or otherwise, return them to the owner. The operation was a hazardous one for the lender as well as the borrower. A failure on the part of the fugitive to send back the papers would imperil his benefactor, and the discovery of the papers in possession of the wrong man would imperil both the fugitive and his friend. It was therefore an act of supreme trust on the part of a freeman of color thus to put in jeopardy his own liberty that another might be free. It was, however, not unfrequently bravely done, and was seldom discovered (2008, p. 112).

As Douglass describes how slaves escaped, he removes the link between himself and Franklin. In his first two versions, the escape reflects Douglass's fulfillment of the American Dream. Zafar expresses this link as she points out Douglass's emphasis on personal freedom, hard work, and industriousness in *Narrative* (Zafar, 1990, p. 99). Consequently, Zafar ties this emphasis to Douglass's portrayal of himself as "Self-made": "To break out of the 'social death' of slavery, Douglass adopted the role of the self-made American man, already a powerful trope by the mid-nineteenth century" (1990, p. 101). As Douglass maintains his route to freedom a secret in *Bondage*, the escape cannot be said to conflict with the image of Franklin in his second version either. In the passage quoted above, however, Douglass's journey no longer reflects Franklin's template. As defined by Franklin's search for "moral perfection," Franklin emphasizes the aspect of being "Self-made" as central to his achievement of the American dream. Depicting the route to freedom in *Life*, Douglass portrays it as reliant on the help of other colored men. Consequently, the escape no longer depicts the journey of a "Self-made" man.

In *Life*, Douglass uses the escape to highlight the extraordinary capabilities of all colored who escaped. Douglass underlines how already freed slaves helped other colored men still enslaved. Highlighting the dangers of failure when using the described method, Douglass further emphasizes the community which exists amongst colored men. In doing so, Douglass

showcases that slaves are capable of much more than they are usually credited with at the time. Instead of conforming to the standard, portraying slaves as lazy and helpless, Douglass highlights the multidimensional aspect of colored men. He acknowledges how networks consisting of both enslaved and free colored people worked together to ensure that more members of the colored community became free. Further emphasizing the strength of this community, Douglass describes how one colored man is willing to endanger himself at the possibility of freedom for another. As these men outsmart the institution of slavery, *Life* further highlights the intelligence of the colored community. *Life* expresses that the colored community is much more than just either former or current slaves. They are multifaceted, and without *Life*, that aspect of Douglass's portrayal of the colored community is neglected.

To summarize, it is not hard work and determination that makes Douglass achieve his freedom in *Life*, as he is reliant on the help of the colored community. Douglass further uses the escape in *Life* to portray how his journey is not extraordinary amongst colored men. Highlighting how those who have made the journey to freedom help those still in captivity, Douglass further emphasizes the colored community as well. The passage on the escape in *Life* thus introduces an entirely new aspect of the colored man to Douglass's narrative. Consequently, *Life* expresses a change in Douglass's writing on race.

### **Continued Emphasis on Community**

Douglass continues to emphasize the strength of the colored community further in *Life*. That Douglass portrays this in the escape is significant to how colored men are described in his narrative. However, *Life*'s emphasis on the significance of a colored community is present beyond the escape. In the chapter following the escape, "Life as a freeman" (2008, pp. 115-122), Douglass continues to introduce more extraordinary colored men to his narrative:

I have seldom met three working men more intelligent than were John Briggs, Abraham Rodman, and Solomon Pennington, who labored with me on the 'Java' and

‘Golconda.’ They were sober, thoughtful, and upright, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of liberty, and I am much indebted to them for many valuable ideas and impressions. They taught me that all colored men were not light-hearted triflers, incapable of serious thought or effort (2008, pp. 120-121).

Seeing that there is an equivalent chapter in *Bondage*, the introduction of this quote differs from the escape. Douglass’s justification for leaving his escape out of *Bondage* is well reasoned. In *Bondage’s* “Life as a freeman” (1969, pp. 335-356), Douglass does not explain why these colored men are left out. Although one could argue that Douglass does this to protect their identity, Douglass’s earlier writing in *Bondage* contradicts this. Describing how he received help when learning to write in the streets of Baltimore, Douglass writes in both *Narrative* and *Bondage*:

I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a slight testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them, but prudence forbids; not that it would injure me, but it might, possibly, embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offense to do any thing, directly or indirectly, to promote a slave’s freedom, in a slave state (1969, p. 155; 2014, p. 29).

In *Life*, Douglass ends the same passage as quoted here by naming the boys: “I am greatly indebted to these boys – Gustavus Dorgan, Joseph Bailey, Charles Farity, and William Cosdry” (2008, p. 45). This passage shows that previously in *Bondage*, Douglass has given credit to white people without revealing any identities. Thus, the argument that Douglass is protecting the identity of the colored men does not answer why he does not also give credit to John Briggs, Abraham Rodman, and Solomon Pennington without naming them in *Bondage*, as he does with the white boys. One must, therefore, question Douglass’s reason for downplaying the importance of the colored community when describing his time in New Bedford in *Bondage*.

Examining the quote from *Life*, I argue that Douglass’s reason is twofold. The first part of the reason is that these men are colored. As the boys in the quote from *Bondage* are white, this would answer why Douglass can credit them in his first two narratives. In *Narrative* and *Bondage*, Douglass is connecting himself with the white readership. Thus, as

he emphasizes the kindness of the young boys in Baltimore, Douglass indirectly portrays the kindness in his white readers and their kids. Douglass is still adhering to this connection in *Bondage*, and the colored men are therefore still left out. The second part of Douglass's reason to introduce the colored men first in *Life* is that they enhance Douglass's emphasis on the colored community. As already seen by the escape, Douglass is emphasizing the importance of colored people in *Life*. These men increase the presence of multidimensional colored men in Douglass's life. Stating that these men are some of the most intelligent working men he has ever met (2008, p. 120), they do not match the role colored men are confined to in Douglass's first two narratives. As a result, these men do not fit the narrative until *Life*. Coincidentally, the presence of John Briggs, Abraham Rodman, and Solomon Pennington further advocates that Douglass is not "Self-made" in *Life*. With sentences such as "much indebted to them" and "they taught me," Douglass expresses that these colored men influenced him. As already expressed through Franklin's search for moral perfection, Franklin is neither indebted to nor taught by anyone. Thus, Douglass's reason for including these men in *Life* is not because it was not safe to do so in the preceding narratives. Douglass includes these men to continue the depiction of the colored community as multifaceted. As a result, *Life* simultaneously advocates that Douglass's narrative does not reflect the Franklinian model. Emphasizing the importance other members of the colored community had on his journey, Douglass highlights how his success is not a result of individualism but rather the community amongst colored people.

In the added presence of John Briggs, Abraham Rodman, and Solomon Pennington to "Life as a Freeman," the final sentence epitomizes that Douglass is emphasizing the importance of a community amongst the colored in *Life*. "They taught me that all colored men were not light-hearted triflers, incapable of serious thought or effort" (2008, p. 121). In writing this sentence, Douglass portrays how these men changed his view of other colored

men. Douglass is not depicting himself as a man standing out from the rest. Instead, he is portraying the positive outcome that a colored community provides. In *Bondage*, Douglass gives reasons for why *Narrative* portrays colored men differently. After having spoken at a Garrisonian gathering, Douglass describes the feedback he was given: “It was said to me, ‘Better have a *little* of the plantation manner of speech than not; ‘tis not best that you seem too learned.’” (1969, p. 362). Douglass is told this as his eloquence made people question his past:

People doubted if I had ever been a slave, nor act like a slave, and that they believed I had never been south of Mason and Dixon’s line. “He don’t tell us where he came from – what his master’s name was – how he got away – nor the story of his experience. Besides, he is educated, and is, in this, a contradiction of all the facts we have concerning the ignorance of slaves.” (1969, p. 362)

To answer these accusations, Douglass wrote *Narrative*. Consequently, to satisfy both those who questioned his story and the Garrisonians who sponsored it, Douglass ties himself to the image of Franklin. Linking himself to a white man, Douglass rationalized to the reader why he contradicts the standard view of a black man. In *Life*, however, Douglass moves away from this link. This break further advocates that the inclusion of John Briggs, Abraham Rodman, and Solomon Pennington contradicts what white men had imprinted in Douglass, “They taught me that all colored men were not light-hearted triflers, incapable of serious thought or effort” (2008, p. 121). Thus, *Life* ends Douglass’s narrative of depicting colored men within white men’s image. *Life* instead introduces passages that highlight colored men as multidimensional. Furthermore, he emphasizes the role other colored men held in him being able to complete his journey. Doing this, Douglass highlights that his achievements are a result of a colored community, not him being “Self-made.” *Life* depicts the accomplishments of a colored man, achieved through the help of other colored men. In other words, *Life* introduces changes that significantly alter how colored men are portrayed in Douglass’s narrative.

## **Breaking From the Franklinian Template Through the Inclusion of Luck**

Depicting his escape in *Life*, Douglass introduces a second aspect. Similarly to the already discussed reliance on other colored people, Douglass additionally establishes luck as a factor in his escape. The inclusion of luck is of importance as Benjamin Franklin in depicting his journey in *Autobiography* has no focus on this. On the contrary, his journey famously describes his transformation from “rags to riches” by seizing opportunity when it occurs. In other words, luck and Franklin’s image of being “Self-Made” do not correlate. Describing his escape in *Life*, Douglass incorporates statements such as “My whole future depended upon the decision of this conductor”(2008, p. 113), and “Fortunately, in the hurry of the moment, he did not see me” (p. 114). As with the increased emphasis on colored community, Douglass likewise continues to bring in the aspect of luck in “Life as a Freeman”: “I was not only fortunate in finding work with Mr. Howland, but in my work-fellows” (2008, p. 120). Including these statements first in *Life*, Douglass’s third narrative highlights an aspect found in neither *Narrative* nor *Bondage*. No longer reflecting the image of Franklin, Douglass uses luck to emphasize further how the colored man cannot copy a white man's journey. Instead of editing the depiction of his journey to fit the abolitionist narrative, Douglass includes all these aspects to emphasize that he is colored.

Well established by now, it is Douglass’s emphasis on personal freedom, hard work, and industriousness in *Narrative* that makes Zafar connect him with Franklin (Zafar, 1990, p. 99). Introducing the aspect of luck to the narrative, Douglass makes *Life* further contradict Zafar’s notions. In *Life*, Douglass holds the defining element to be in the hands of other people at crucial moments. Douglass clearly states this in *Life*: “My whole future depended upon the decision of this conductor” (2008, p. 113) With statements such as this one, Douglass changes the determining factor of his success from that emphasized by Zafar, to sheer luck. Here, some might argue that the narrative still fits Zafar’s notions of personal

freedom, hard work, and industriousness, even though Douglass introduces luck to his story. Although these notions still hold a central role in Douglass's narrative, I argue that the effect of introducing luck contradicts any connection with Franklin. Taking the decisive moment out of his hands, Douglass emphasizes that he is not a white man.

Personal freedom, hard work, and industriousness might be enough for a white American to achieve success. By introducing luck, Douglass expresses in *Life* that for a colored man, however, these factors alone are not enough. *Life* thus becomes a statement that Douglass, as a colored man, never will be able to reflect Franklin. Douglass further highlights this as his emphasis on luck does not only contradict Zafar's notions on what connects Douglass with Franklin. As mentioned, Franklin's template of the "Self-made man" does not include the factor of luck. Consequently, luck does not only go against the factors highlighted in *Narrative* but also against Franklin's template itself. Although this might seem the same, I argue that there is a significant difference. Even though the introduction of luck contradicts the specific notions that Zafar view as connecting *Narrative* and Franklin, that does not necessarily mean that the presence of luck excludes the possibility of a connection between Franklin and Douglass's narratives. However, seeing that luck contradicts Franklin's template itself, I argue that the introduction of luck further distances Douglass from Franklin. This factor further emphasizes how Douglass in *Life* is introducing a multitude of new aspects that separate his story from Franklin's. By including luck, Douglass portrays to the colored that they should not aspire to reflect Franklin. As colored, they will never have the same journey as Franklin. The factor of luck emphasizes how Douglass's journey never followed the Franklinian template. This change leads to further emphasis on the importance of unity and helping each other. Expressing the break from Franklin, luck puts further emphasis on that which genuinely led Douglass to his freedom.

## To Understand, a Man Must Stand Under

So far, in this chapter, the focus has been on aspects introduced in *Life*. These examples consequently express how Douglass breaks from the image of Benjamin Franklin and being “Self-made.” In this part, however, I will show that Douglass changes whom he is writing for by doing more than just breaking from Franklin. I argue that Douglass, by withholding information in *Life* even though he can elaborate, deliberately makes part of his story opaque to the white readers. In doing so, Douglass ensures that those who are not former slaves cannot truly understand the experience of slaves. In other words, Douglass emphasizes that he is no longer writing for the white reader.

One must acknowledge that the changes discussed so far represent only a small part of *Life*. In the equivalent parts of *Bondage* and *Life*, Douglass is, for the most part, restating the writing from *Bondage*. There is, of course, a reason for this. In writing *Bondage*, Douglass expressed that *Narrative* was not truly his story. Rachel Blumenthal’s quote expresses this at the very start of this chapter:

When Frederick Douglass explains in his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), that his white abolitionist advocates wanted only “facts” from Douglass so that they could “take care of the philosophy,” he invites us to re-think the original *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) as in part a product of William Lloyd Garrison (Blumenthal, 2013, p. 178).

Whereas Douglass is liberated from the restraints of *Narrative* when writing *Bondage*, *Life* does not represent the same change. As both *Bondage* and *Life* are autobiographies, Douglass’s changes are subsequently fewer than what they are from *Narrative* to *Bondage*. However, Douglass is still making some changes to his narrative in *Life*. Therefore, the passages where Douglass keeps his narrative the same as in *Bondage* must be explored as well. I argue that in making alterations to his story in *Life*, Douglass implicitly expresses that he is pleased with that which he does not alter. Emphasizing how Douglass holds *Narrative* differently from *Bondage*, Douglass clearly states whenever he uses writing from his first

version. Citing *Narrative* word for word in both *Bondage* and *Life*, Douglass in both works expresses its origin before citing: “I cannot better express my sense of them now, than ten years ago” and “I used this language:...” (Douglass, 1969, pp. 98,179; 2008, pp. 27,54). *Bondage*, however, is repeated in *Life* without any such declaration. In other words, one cannot know solely from reading *Life* whether Douglass’s writing is new in *Life*, or if he is repeating *Bondage*. Therefore, I argue that Douglass indirectly adds weight to his writing when he decides to keep the writing from *Bondage* in *Life*. Seeing that this added weight is visible only in *Life*, it further advocates for the inclusion of *Life* in Douglass’s literary canon. Furthermore, Douglass continues to emphasize that his story is no longer written for a white audience through this added weight. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter has Douglass’s changes from *Narrative* to *Bondage* already been addressed by scholars such as Robert Levine and John Stauffer (Levine, 2007; Stauffer, 2007). Also pointed out, however, is that these scholars do not include *Life*. I will, therefore, show how Douglass withholds information in *Life* and how this enhances the notion of one having to have endured in order to understand.

Writing *Life*, Douglass is free to move away from the secrecy of *Narrative* and *Bondage*. Thus, he can tell his story without censoring it. That Douglass is free to do so has already been shown through the passages of his escape. It is of great interest, therefore, when Douglass decides to keep the very same secrecy in *Life* as he does in *Bondage*. One occasion where this occurs is when Douglass describes the meetings he had with the men he was going to escape from Mr. Freeland with (Douglass, 1969, pp. 280-281; 2008, p. 91; 2014, p. 50).

Not mentioned in *Narrative*, Douglass states in *Bondage*:

We had several words, expressive of things, important to us, which we understood, but which, even if distinctly heard by an outsider, would convey no certain meaning. I have reasons for suppressing these *pass-words*, which the reader will easily divine. I hated the secrecy; but where slavery is powerful, and liberty is weak, the latter is driven to concealment or to destruction (1969, p. 280).

This passage is a lot like that of Douglass's escape in *Bondage*. Douglass explains why he cannot disclose his escape, as he does not want to endanger anyone who might follow him.

On this occasion, however, Douglass does not reveal anything in *Life* either:

We had several words, expressive of things important to us, which we understood, but which, even if distinctly heard by an outsider, would have conveyed no certain meaning. I hated this secrecy; but where slavery was powerful, and liberty weak, the latter was driven to concealment or destruction (2008, p. 91).

Unlike the escape, Douglass decides to keep the veil that exists between his story and the reader. I argue that by not revealing the secrets held amongst Douglass and his fellow slaves, Douglass amplifies the bond between himself and other formerly enslaved colored men.

Those who have been in the same situation as Douglass will understand, as they share the same experiences. By keeping this secrecy in *Life*, even though he does not have to, Douglass reserves the entirety of his story for colored people. Whereas the Franklin template ensured that Douglass's story was relatable for the white audience in the first two narratives, Douglass continues to manifest the opaqueness of his story in *Life*. He is free to give the white reader the key to understand but decides not to do so. Whereas the previous subchapter expresses a move away from the white reader, I argue that this expresses an exclusion of the white reader.

That Douglass does this in *Life* is further emphasized as he removes the reason for him not being able to reveal the passwords as well. In *Bondage*, Douglass writes: "I have reasons for suppressing these *pass-words*, which the reader will easily divine" (1969, p. 280). In *Life*, this sentence is removed (2008, p. 91). Some readers might consequently challenge my view of the passages being the same. I argue, however, that it is the omittance of this sentence that allows Douglass to keep the passage in *Life* equal to that in *Bondage*. As Douglass has no reason for keeping the passwords from the reader in *Life*, he must remove the sentence to keep the passage the same. If not, *Life's* circumstances imply that Douglass must give full disclosure of his passwords, as exemplified by the escape. As a result, removing the sentence is essential for the passage to be kept the same in *Life*. It is this decision that I argue further

advocate Douglass's emphasis on not only keeping his story opaque to the white reader but also stating that it is. In *Bondage*, the passage states how Douglass and his companions disguised their planning from anyone within earshot. In *Life*, Douglass enlarges upon the "we," making it include all who is not an "outsider." As Douglass removes the notion of "pass-words" completely, he makes the words "which we understood" part of the universal language of all slaves.

In other words, Douglass states even more clearly the importance of having experienced the hardship of slavery to understand his narrative fully. While he in *Bondage* excuses the lack of an explanation, Douglass is unapologetic about not revealing the passwords in *Life*. I argue that this expresses Douglass's attitude in *Life*, as he withholds information at free will. Whereas *Narrative* is a testimony of Douglass's past as a slave, Douglass expresses in *Life* that his story is no longer written for the white audience. Since *Bondage* is written at a time when the redaction of information is necessary, one cannot determine if it is by choice or not. *Life*, however, indicates that the passage expresses Douglass's emphasis on the shared experience held by colored. As *Life* introduces such clarifications to Douglass's story, he alters the role of identity and race in his narrative. Whereas Douglass, in his first two versions, uses his identity to connect himself with the white reader, he reverses it to apply to the colored reader in *Life*. The passage, therefore, reads as an increase of the emphasis on the black community. Douglass gives more information to those who are part of the "we" than those who are not.

Douglass continues to emphasize further the bond held amongst those who have experienced the same hardship in *Life* by reciting passages from *Bondage*. On the same page as the passage on the passwords, Douglass writes in *Bondage*: "...it may seem to the reader quite absurd, to regard the proposed escape as a formidable undertaking. But to *understand*, some one has said that a man must *stand under*" (1969, p. 281). As established in the previous

paragraph, Douglass is limited in how much description and explanation he can give in *Bondage*. Consequently, there are natural reasons why Douglass cannot disclose enough information to make a man understand. In *Life*, however, Douglass again withholds information before repeating *Bondage* by stating: "...it may seem to the reader quite absurd to regard the proposed escape as a formidable undertaking. But to understand, some one has said, a man must stand under" (2008, p. 91). As a result, Douglass is making choices when writing *Life* to ensure that "to understand, a man must stand under." Douglass is free to expand on the proposed escape in *Life*. Instead, he decides to give the ability to understand only to those who have "stood under" and undergone the same experiences as he did. In doing so, Douglass continues to emphasize how the colored are part of the "we" and everyone else as "outsiders." Douglass does not change his story from *Bondage*, and he makes the same point of having to endure to understand in *Life*. However, given the circumstances of *Life*, Douglass has more editorial freedom.

Consequently, the decision not to elaborate on the passage indicates Douglass's added emphasis on the connection colored people share. In other words, Douglass makes choices in *Life*, specifically to emphasize that his connection is with colored people due to shared experiences. More importantly, this continues to contradict the connection to white people expressed in the first two versions. Consequently, I argue that the emphasis on his story being opaque to the white reader further advocates the already argued outcome of Douglass breaking from Franklin. This change continues to express the essential notion concerning Douglass's discourse on race and identity. Juxtaposing Douglass's discourse in his first two narratives with *Life*, it is evident that a discussion without *Life* misrepresents Douglass's final view. As a result, the inclusion of *Life* is essential for a study to portray Douglass's concluding writing on race, and his portrayed identity, correctly.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to show the impact of Douglass altering his writing on race and identity in *Life*. Looking at scholars such as Blumenthal and Bennet, I argued that there is a gap in the discussion when it comes to the inclusion of *Life*. Scholarly works on Douglass argues that his writing closely reflects Benjamin Franklin. The basis of this argument is that Douglass in *Narrative* and *Bondage* depicts himself as a “Self-made man.” Additionally, in his first two versions, Douglass also emphasizes the notions of hard work and perseverance as the success factors of his escape. Showing how Douglass introduces new information in *Life*, I argued that this new information contradicts hard work and perseverance as the success factors of his journey. Furthermore, as Douglass alters his heritage, he consequently removes himself from reflecting Benjamin Franklin. As he removes himself from Franklin, Douglass coincidingly highlights the importance of community amongst colored. *Life* introduces several new characters who express the multidimensionality of the colored community. In doing this, Douglass breaks from the traditional portrayal of colored men in his final version. This break again underlines that *Life* offers new insight into Douglass’s writing on race and identity. Without *Life*, Douglass portrays how he achieved freedom by reflecting a white man. In *Life*, the same freedom is achieved by receiving help from other colored men.

Further advocating the importance of *Life*, I explored the effect of it being written in 1881. Douglass was free to reveal information which he previously had to redact from his narrative. I, therefore, studied a passage where Douglass could add information to what he writes in *Bondage* but decides not to do so. By withholding information, Douglass emphasizes the bond colored people who have endured the same injustice share. The emphasis on this bond reflects the altered view of race and identity by Douglass in *Life*. Considering that Douglass only breaks from this in *Life*, this highlights the significance of Douglass’s final version. As Blumenthal states did Douglass with the publication of *Bondage*

advocate a reassessment of his story in *Narrative*. Seeing that *Life* offers such an amount of critical alterations to *Bondage* again, I view it as imperative that the same reassessment is done with *Life*

## Chapter two: Douglass and religion

### Introduction

Reading either *Narrative*, *Bondage*, or *Life*, one will find the presence of religion in Douglass's narrative. As a result, religion is one of the most scholarly discussed topics in Douglass's writing. Yet, scholars who have studied the presence of religion in Douglass's works have, in large, focused on *Narrative* and *Bondage*. In *Narrative*, Douglass is restricted in his religious critique by Garrison and the AASS. In *Bondage*, Douglass is consequently critiquing religion freely. With the publication of *Life*, Douglass changes his discourse on religion. Reducing the extent of religious critique present, as well as lessening the directness of his critique, Douglass portrays a less confrontational critique in *Life*. This change, in turn, puts Douglass's religious view in *Life* in the middle of that portrayed in his first two versions. When conducting a scholarly discussion on Douglass's religious view, disregarding *Life* thus results in a misrepresented version on the development of Douglass's religious view.

To express *Life*'s religious view, I have divided this chapter into four subchapters. All of these are addressing different aspects of Douglass's writing, such as the presence of religion in New Bedford, and the altered discourse on religious slaveholders. Exploring these changes, I will study how they impact Douglass's writing on religion within that specific aspect. Some of these aspects have been discussed in previous scholarly works. Whenever this applies, I will bring in relevant studies to show how these respective discussions change with the inclusion of *Life*, further emphasizing *Life*'s importance. In the first subchapter, I will address the changes Douglass makes to his appendixes. Building on Donald Gibson's study on *Narrative*'s appendix, I will explore the changes Douglass makes when writing the following two appendixes. As Douglass makes significant alterations to the appendixes between each publication, the religious presence is coincidentally altered in each one.

Consequently, I view the focus of the appendix to express Douglass's focus in the specific narrative.

Continuing the use of previous scholarly work, I will use John Ernest and his article on "Crisis and Faith in Douglass's Work." Discussing how Douglass portrays a critique towards religion, Ernest ground his arguments in large on Douglass's first two versions. Douglass, however, removes several of the passages Ernest uses to depict Douglass's view on religion in *Life*. Therefore, I will explore how the removal of these passages affect Ernest's discussion. This discussion will consequently give insight into differences in Douglass's portrayal of religious critique post-escape in *Bondage* and *Life*. Following this, I will continue by looking at alterations made by Douglass to his narrative. A critique made towards *Life* is that it only adds chapters to an already extended *Bondage* (Matlack, 1979, p. 25). I argue that this is a misconception of *Life*. To illustrate this argument, I will explore changes made in passages portraying religious slaveholders. As Douglass removes several of these passages in *Life*, I argue that *Life* consequently reduces the religious critique. Finally, I will show how Douglass still maintains a critiquing view of religion while reducing the confrontational tone of his critique. At this point, I will already have shown religious slaveholders being removed from the narrative in *Life* to reduce religious critique. Therefore, this part will explore passages where Douglass keeps the critique of religious slaveholders in *Life*, but still reduces the confronting tone of his critique. Douglass maintaining parts of the religious critique in *Life* furthermore advocates that his religious view in *Life* is between that in his first two versions. Douglass's critique has lessened, but it has not disappeared.

To summarize, I will, in this chapter, express why *Life* should be part of the canonical literature on Douglass's religious view. Douglass alters how his religious view is portrayed in *Life*, which in turn results in Douglass portraying a different view of religion in *Life* than in

either of his first two versions. To summarize, I view *Life* as essential to obtain a complete understanding of the development in Douglass's religious view.

### **Change in the Appendixes**

Donald Gibson states in his article "Faith, Doubt, and Apostasy: Evidence of Things Unseen in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*":

Frederick Douglass certainly knew that there existed the possibility – even the likelihood – that his narrative could be read as an expression of doubt and apostasy. For that reason he added an Appendix, a contrary one; ordinarily, appendixes are taken out for reasons of health – not put in (Gibson, 1990, pp. 86-87).

Adding an appendix, Douglass ensures that the critique throughout *Narrative* reads as a critique of those who conduct malpractice of the Christian faith. Without the appendix, *Narrative* can be read as a critique of Christianity as a religion. As Garrison and the AASS sponsor Douglass, he must ensure that he excludes the possibility of such an interpretation in his narrative. Margaret Fuller expresses Douglass's success in doing so in her review of *Narrative*:

Upon the subject of Religion, he speaks with great force, and not more than our own sympathies can respond to. The inconsistencies of Slaveholding professors of religion cry to Heaven. We are not disposed to detest, or refuse communion with them. Their blindness is but one form of that prevalent fallacy which substitutes a creed for a faith, a ritual for a life (Fuller, 1845, p. 22).

Gibson expresses the possibility of *Narrative* to be seen as "an expression of doubt and apostasy." Fuller's review does not comment on any such notion being portrayed in *Narrative*. Furthermore, other critiques who have commented on Douglass's writing on religion in *Narrative* also tend to view it as coming across more direct than what Douglass intended (Matlack, 1979). As a result, Douglass's intent for the appendix must be seen as successful.

James Matlack points out in his article that Douglass's narratives are "framed" by the combination of the preface and appendix (Matlack, 1979, p. 18). In *Narrative*, this frame

holds the traditional role of being a “white envelope.” Breaking from Garrison and the AASS, Douglass’s frame coincidentally also moves away from the notion of being a white envelope. Nevertheless, the combination of the preface and appendix continues to frame Douglass’s narrative in both of his final two versions. Although I do acknowledge the significance of the preface, the author is different for each version. Additionally, they are not written by Douglass. As my focus is on Douglass’s writing, I consequently limit my focus to the appendix in this thesis. Agreeing with Gibson’s argument, the appendix in *Narrative* refers to a concrete notion within the narrative that Douglass wishes to emphasize. In the case of *Narrative*, it is Douglass’s perceived tone towards religion. Coinciding with other scholarly work on Douglass, the exploration of this topic has as well mostly been limited to *Narrative*. I argue that the appendixes of *Bondage* and *Life* similarly creates a frame for the narratives. However, contrary to *Narrative*’s appendix, Douglass can determine himself what this framework will express. This frame consequently highlights specific notions within each version that Douglass wishes to emphasize. I will, therefore, continue the use of Gibson’s article to further discuss the effect of *Narrative*’s Appendix, before introducing *Bondage* and *Life* to the discussion. As Douglass alters the writing on religion in each appendix, the framework in which each narrative confines itself changes as well.

*Narrative* is affected by the editorial authority of Garrison and the AASS, as well as having to follow the template set for slave narratives. This influence has been expressed in the historical development of the slave narrative and seen in Olney’s article on the template for slave narratives (1984, p. 50). Both factors indicate that Douglass’s critique of religion had to confine itself within parameters set by others than Douglass himself. Repeating Gould from the historical context, the goal of abolitionist-sponsored slave narratives was to expose the evils of the Southern plantation, and the hypocrisy of Southern Christianity (Gould, 2007, p.

19). Consequently, Douglass had to ensure that his audience saw his *Narrative* as a critique of the south, and equally important, not of the north. Hence, Douglass states in the Appendix:

I find, since reading over the foregoing Narrative, that I have, in several instances, spoken in such a tone and manner, respecting religion, as may possibly lead those unacquainted with my religious views to suppose me an opponent of all religion. To remove the liability of such misapprehension, I deem it proper to append the following brief explanation. What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the slaveholding religion of this land... (2014, p. 67).

This statement advocates the view of *Narrative's* appendix held by Gibson: "Frederick Douglass puts his in for the sake of sanitizing the implications of the *Narrative*..." (1990, p. 87). Gibson argues that Douglass included the Appendix to ensure that *Narrative* separated the north from the south. However, Gibson goes on to stress that: "Though Douglass certainly seems committed to Christian belief during his narrative, there is some reason to believe that he felt a more than passing hostility to Christianity" (1990, p. 87). Seeing that the circumstances of *Narrative* restrict Douglass's writing, one must look to *Bondage* to get Douglass's comments on that very notion.

The focus portrayed in the appendix changes completely in *Bondage*. No longer functioning as a sanitizer of the religious critique throughout the narrative, the appendix instead consists of a collection of excerpts from speeches held by Douglass. Included in *Bondage's* Appendix is excerpts from *Reception Speech*, *Letter to his Old Master*, *The Nature of Slavery*, *Inhumanity of Slavery*, *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?*, *The Internal Slave Trade*, *The Slavery Party* and *The Anti-Slavery Movement*. (Douglass, 1969, pp. 407-464). Changing from a slave narrative to an autobiography, *Bondage* no longer is confined to the template for slave narratives that *Narrative* was. Furthermore, Douglass is no longer being sponsored by abolitionists, either. Consequently, Douglass does no longer have to confine his narrative to the abolitionist parameters that restricted *Narrative* from critiquing Christianity. By changing the content of the Appendix, Douglass goes from sanitizing his narrative, to emphasizing the hypocrisy of religion.

Starting with the first excerpt, Douglass in his *Reception Speech* does not separate the religion of the North and the South:

While America is printing tracts and bibles; sending missionaries abroad to convert the heathen; expending her money in various ways for the promotion of the gospel in foreign lands – the slave not only lies forgotten, uncared for, but is trampled under foot by the very churches of the land. What have we in America? Why, we have slavery made part of the religion of the land (1969, p. 415).

Douglass continues to emphasize this critique in the *Inhumanity of Slavery*. In this speech, Douglass clearly states that the wickedness of slavery's effect on religion does not confine itself to the South:

I have shown that slavery is wicked... - wicked in that it mars and defaces the image of God by cruel and barbarous inflictions – wicked, in that it contravenes the laws of eternal justice, and tramples in the dust all the humane and heavenly precepts of the new testament. The evils resulting from this huge system of iniquity are not confined to the states south of Mason and Dixon's line (1969, pp. 436-437).

Douglass continues to critique the imagined separation created by the Mason-Dixon line in

*The Internal Slave Trade*:

By that act, Mason and Dixon's line has been obliterated; New York has become Virginia; and the power to hold, hunt, and sell men, women, and children as slaves, remains no longer a mere institution, but is now an institution of the Whole United States. The power is co-extensive with the star-spangled banner and American Christianity (1969, p. 449).

In the same speech, Douglass upholds his view that the slave-upholding religion is present in all of the US: "Behold the practical operation of this internal slave trade – the American slave trade sustained by American politics and American religion!" (1969, p. 446). Including a speech with such a confrontational statement in his appendix, Douglass is in no way "sanitizing" his narrative with the appendix in *Bondage*. Whereas Douglass is ensuring that he is solely talking about the religion of the South in *Narrative*, he makes it clear that it is the religion of all of America that sustains the internal slave trade by including this speech. The same view is fronted in the excerpt from *The Slavery Party*, where Douglass highlights Christianity's acceptance of hate towards colored people in America:

The Irish people, warm-hearted, generous, and sympathizing with the oppressed everywhere, when they stand upon their own green island, are instantly taught, on arriving in this Christian country, to hate and despise the colored people (1969, p. 454).

Douglass also includes what might be his most famous speech *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?*, continuing to emphasize the hypocrisy found within the white man's celebration of 4<sup>th</sup> of July:

To him [the slave], your celebration is a sham; ...your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy – a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages (1969, p. 445).

Introducing these excerpts in the appendix, it is quite clear that *Bondage* focuses on a different notion than the appendix in *Narrative*. Douglass is continuously critiquing religion as a single entity, focusing on how the North is just as complicit in upholding slavery as the South. In doing so, Douglass changes the presence of religion in *Bondage*. The appendix goes from sanitizing the story in *Narrative* to reinforcing the religious critique in *Bondage*. That Douglass is more critical in his view towards religion in *Bondage* is well known. More importantly, however, is it that this change endorses the notion that the changes Douglass makes to the appendix establish the focus of the narratives further. As Matlack states, the appendix, in part, makes up the frame of the narrative (1979, p. 18). In *Life*, Douglass completely changes the appendix once again. With these changes, Douglass removes religion from the framework encircling his narrative.

In removing religion from the appendix, Douglass achieves two things. First of all, he makes the “frame” of *Life* the shared community and collective prosperity amongst colored people. Secondly, Douglass's reduced emphasis on religion demonstrates that he is not as blunt in his religious views compared to his second version. This change in religious critique reflects on to the appendix as Douglass expresses neither the need to neutralize nor amplify his writing on religion in *Life*. Douglass makes this change by exchanging the speeches he

quotes in the appendix in *Bondage*. Douglass replaces the speeches in *Bondage* with two new speeches: *Unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument* and *West India Emancipation* (2008, pp. 283-298).

Advocating a reduced necessity to underline his religious view in the appendix, Douglass instead highlights how the colored community works as a “frame” in his third narrative. This change is apparent in the first of the two speeches in *Life's Appendix*, *Unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument*. In the excerpt from this speech, Douglass expresses his African heritage:

It must be admitted, truth compels me to admit, even here in the presence of the monument we have erected to his memory, Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man. He was preeminently a white man's President, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men (2008, p. 285).

Using words such as “our man” and “our model,” as well as highlighting that Lincoln was “a white man” and “a white man's President,” Douglass clearly states with whom he associates. Setting the frame for his narrative, *Life's* appendix highlights that Douglass is part of the colored community. This emphasis coincides with the analysis conducted in the first chapter, showcasing that Douglass's appendix reflects the narrative itself.

With the second speech of the appendix, *West India Emancipation*, Douglass further emphasizes how every one of African descent are part of a shared community. Speaking to a gathering celebrating the emancipation of the West Indies, Douglass states that “The day we celebrate is preeminently the colored man's day” (2008, p. 291). In other words, Douglass is expressing how the emancipation of the West Indies and how it took place not only affects the local colored people but colored people everywhere. Douglass further emphasizes the connection between the colored population of the West Indies and the rest of the world as he continues: “The emancipation of our brothers in the West Indies come home to us and stirs our hearts and fills our souls with those grateful sentiments which link mankind in a common

brotherhood” (2008, p. 291). Again, viewing the appendix as the frame of Douglass’s narrative, these quotes express that the prosperity of one colored man reflects onto all colored people. Douglass urges his reader to see his accomplishments as a testament to the success of a colored man, not a “Self-made” man. Continuing with the emancipation of the West Indies, Douglass moves on to how they achieved their liberty:

Great and valuable concessions have in different ages been made to the liberties of mankind. They have, however, come not at the command of reason and persuasion, but by the sharp and terrible edge of the sword. To this rule West India Emancipation is a splendid exception. It came, not by the sword, but by the word; not by the brute force of numbers, but by the still small voice of truth; not by barricades, bayonets, and bloody revolution, but by peaceful agitation; not by divine interference, but by the exercise of simple, human reason and feeling. I repeat, that, in this peculiarity, we have what is most valuable to the human race generally (2008, p. 293).

In making these comments, Douglass does not only highlight how the West Indies got their emancipation but simultaneously compares how the West Indies managed to get their liberty to the historical standard. In doing so, Douglass highlights that their prosperity reflects on to all of the world's colored population. Douglass views the accomplishment of the colored in the West Indies to apply to everyone included in the colored community: “...we have what is most valuable to the human race generally.” Douglass’s use of “we” when portraying attributes held by colored people in the West Indies further advocated how he in *Life* view the colored community as a single entity.

Compared to the appendixes of his first two versions, Douglass gives barely any commentary towards religion in his final versions appendix. However, as he states that the West Indies emancipation is a result “not by divine interference,” but by the resourcefulness of colored men, Douglass expresses *Life*’s change in emphasis on religion. Although there still is a presence of religion in *Life*, highlighting the hypocrisy of Christian Americans, Douglass removes the critique towards religion at critical moments in his narrative. As a result, Douglass shifts the focus from religious critique onto the achievements of colored men. Viewing the appendix to set the “frame” of his narrative, the inclusion of *Unveiling of the*

*Freedmen's Monument* and *West India Emancipation* thus illustrates that Douglass's religious critique is less confrontational in *Life*.

### **The Effect of Reducing the Religious Critique**

In the first chapter of this thesis, I explored how Douglass introduces new characters in *Life* to express the multidimensional character of colored men. When it comes to religion, however, Douglass does not add new writing in *Life*. On the contrary, in order to reduce religious critique, Douglass removes passages from his narrative. Thus, that which becomes the focus of Douglass's religious discussion in *Life* is present in *Bondage* as well. By removing passages that reflect poorly on religion, *Life* consequently increases the focus on Douglass's positive encounters with religion. As a result, I argue that Douglass portrays a less confrontational religious view in *Life*. To portray this change in Douglass's religious view, I will use previous scholarly works commentary on passages in *Narrative* and *Bondage*. In their studies, these scholars discuss the effect of the religious critique in Douglass's first two narratives. Comparing their discussions to the religious view that Douglass portrays with his writing in *Life*, the effect of removing the passages becomes evident. I view Douglass's religious critique to lessen in *Life* significantly. This religious view represents a distinct change from that portrayed in either of Douglass's first two narratives. Discussing the development of Douglass's religious discourse, *Life* thus represents the third step in Douglass's development. As a result, I argue that a discussion on the complete development without the inclusion of *Life* will be incomplete.

One scholar who examines Douglass's religious discussion is John Ernest. In his chapter "Crisis and Faith in Douglass's Work" in *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass* (2009), Ernest discusses the topic of religion in all three of Douglass's works. In using all three works, Ernest coincidentally differs from Gibson, who focuses solely on *Narrative*. Shedding light on Douglass's thoughts at the end of his life, Ernest focuses on the

concluding paragraphs of *Life*. Here he finds a statement by Douglass concerning the ineffectuality of prayers and a focus on self-respect, ambition, and effort, as well as a clear critical view of religion's role in African American lives (Ernest, 2009, p. 61). However, Ernest, at the same time, concludes from the same passage: “Included are principles of self-reliance and self-determination, as well as various acknowledgments of the significant obstacles regularly faced by African Americans in a white supremacist nation” (2009, p. 60). It is important to note that this self-reliance and self-determination is not an encouragement of individuality, but rather that a community still is reliant on strong individuals. Ernest’s take on *Life* thus presents Douglass as critiquing religion, but at the same time emphasizing the importance of community.

Ernest follows this by stating: “But behind Douglass’s confident advice and equally confident critique of religious beliefs and practices throughout his life are unsettled and unsettling questions about both crisis and faith” (p. 61). To exemplify these “unsettled and unsettling questions,” Ernest looks to a passage from Douglass’s *Bondage*. The passage selected focuses on how Douglass is in search of a church when arriving in New Bedford: “‘Among my first concerns on reaching New Bedford,’ he states, ‘was to become united with the church, for I had never given up, in reality, on my religious faith’ (MB 359)” (2009, p. 61). Douglass seeks out the Methodist church and attends a service, only to experience segregation between the white and black members of the congregation. This experience, in turn, makes Douglass leave the church: “‘I went *out*, and have never been in that church since, although I honestly went there with a view of joining that body’ (MB 361)” (p. 62). Ernest views this act as the starting point of Douglass’s disappointment with the church as a freeman:

This early incident in Douglass’s life of ‘freedom’ marked the beginning of an ongoing pattern of hopes and disappointments, reminding Douglass again and again,

in lessons both familiar and new, that he was member of a society devoted not only to the system of slavery but also to the ideology and practice of white supremacy (p. 62).

Ernest includes a second quote, further advocating this view. Preceding his experience of this segregation, Douglass states that:

I was not then aware of the powerful influence of that religious body in favor of the enslavement of my race, nor did I see how the northern churches could be responsible for the conduct of the southern churches; neither did I fully understand how it could be my duty to remain separate from the church, because bad men were connected with it (1969, p. 351).

Stating that he was “not then aware,” Douglass makes it clear that it was the incident with the church that made him aware: “As Douglass observes in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, when he first sought out a church community in New Bedford he had not fully appreciated the oppressive power of organized religion” (2009, p. 64). Up until that point, Douglass’s view of the Methodist church has in both *Bondage* and *Life* been that it was an antislavery institution in the North:

I had read, also, somewhere in the Methodist Discipline, the following question and answer: ‘*Question*. What shall be done for the extirpation of slavery? *Answer*. We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery; therefore, no slaveholder shall be eligible to nay official station in our church.’ (1969, p. 196; 2008, p. 60).

As a result of the incident taking place in a Methodist church, Douglass’s experience with the church does not correlate with his previous view of the church’s discipline. The northern church becomes all that he was not aware it could be. Therefore, I agree with Ernest in his argument that this passage in *Bondage* thus represents one of the “unsettled and unsettling questions” behind Douglass’s religious critique.

In *Life*, however, Douglass removes the entire passage that leads to the realization of the Methodist church’s practice. Thus, the Methodist church in the North continues to hold the initial view expressed in the quote mentioned above. It is still “as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery” (2008, p. 60). Furthermore, Douglass, as mentioned, states before experiencing the racial segregation in *Bondage* that he was “not then aware” (1969, p. 351).

Stating this, Douglass connects the incident experienced in the church to his realization that he had a duty to remain separate from the church: “neither did I fully understand how it could be my duty to remain separate from the church, because bad men were connected with it” (1969, p. 351). Excluding the “bad men connected with it” from *Life*, Douglass consequently removes the presence of one of Ernest’s examples of that which he describes as “unsettled and unsettling questions about crisis and faith” (2009, p. 61).

Douglass’s writing in *Life* further expresses that the removal of his experience with the congregation of the Methodist church indicates a change in his view on religion. Taking out the incident in the Methodist church, there is only one church mentioned in *Life*’s writing of New Bedford. Thus, the religious focus in this part of *Life* is moved from the Methodist church and onto the “Third Christian church.” A church that coincidentally happens to be a church for colored people only (2008, p. 119). In addition to the congregation being different, Douglass’s experience with the church is drastically different as well. In this church, Douglass is witness to the congregation securing the freedom of a colored man who had had his freedom threatened (2008, p. 119). As a result, the experience Douglass has with religion in New Bedford becomes positive in *Life*. Instead of portraying the “bad men connected with it,” Douglass portrays the good men connected with religion.

As mentioned is Douglass’s experience in the Third Christian church not exclusive to *Life*. Nevertheless, as seen by Ernest’s article, it is Douglass’s experience in the Methodist church that is representative of Douglass’s religious view. Although the experience in the Third Christian church is present in *Bondage*, Douglass’s focus is on the “powerful influence of that religious body in favor of the enslavement of my race” (1969, p. 351). Further discussing Douglass’s thoughts on Christianity, Ernest states:

For Douglass and for many others, the experience of Christianity could not be separated from the experience of slavery. Any viable understanding of religion would

have to involve freedom and, therefore, resistance to slavery as central concerns (2009, p. 63).

Douglass, as already mentioned, states in *Bondage*: “I was not then aware of the powerful influence of that religious body in favor of the enslavement of my race, nor did I see how the northern churches could be responsible for the conduct of the southern churches” (1969, p. 351). Thus, Douglass’s experience in the Methodist church consequently contradicts the view Ernest describes in the quote above. The experience with the Third Christian church, however, does not contradict the description. On the contrary, the very essence of that experience is freedom and resistance to slavery (Douglass, 1969, p. 348; 2008, p. 119). Ernest states later on in his article: “Far from finding it impossible to marry Christianity and antislavery, Douglass found it impossible to divorce one from the other”(2009, p. 68). Whereas Douglass in *Bondage* critiques the Methodist church for not supporting antislavery, he merely removes it in *Life*. Coincidentally, this removal makes Douglass in *Life* increase the emphasis on the experience in the Third Christian church, where Christianity and antislavery is connected. As Douglass goes from critiquing religion to focusing on the experiences which reflect positively on religion, I argue that he portrays a different religious view. Further adding to this view, Douglass does not add the positive experience in *Life*, but rather removes the experience that depicts religion negatively. We know from *Bondage* that Douglass has both negative and positive experiences in New Bedford. As a result, the removal of the negative experience expresses that Douglass’s religious view has mellowed in *Life*. The change Douglass makes to the writing of New Bedford in *Life* thus portrays a development in his religious views. In other words, any discussion on the development of religious discourse in Douglass’s autobiographical works will accordingly be incomplete without the inclusion of *Life*.

## Removing Religious Slaveholders in *Life*

Being Douglass's second autobiography, *Life* has been viewed as only adding chapters to *Bondage*. James Matlack's description of Douglass's final version exemplifies this: "He rewrote the last sections of *My Bondage and My Freedom* and added much new material to cover the intervening period" (p. 25). Summarizing *Life* further, Matlack continues: "Douglass' *Life and Times* suffer from being an example of the fat volume of memoirs that public men so often produce at the end of a busy career" (Matlack, 1979, p. 25). Although the previous subchapter disclosed that *Life* is more than what Matlack describes it as in these quotes, it addressed changes made to Douglass's religious experience in New Bedford. Thus, Matlack's statement that *Life* is changing only the last sections of *Bondage* remains unchallenged. However, when close reading all three works, it becomes evident that Douglass changes more than just his writing post-escape in *Life*. Throughout his three narratives, Douglass writes differently about religious slaveholders in each one. Increasing the critique expressed towards these slaveholders from *Narrative* to *Bondage*, Douglass expresses a clear development in his religious view. Scholars who have discussed Douglass's religious development have, in large, limited their point of view to this change. Douglass, however, removes the critique expressed towards several of these religious slaveholders in *Life*. This removal expresses that his religious view in *Life* is portrayed as less confrontational pre-escape as well. In other words, the removal of these slaveholders makes *Life* portray a third step in the religious development in Douglass's autobiographies. To show this development, I will, with each example, establish the view portrayed in his first two narratives first, allowing for a comparison in the religious critique expressed.

Describing religious slaveholders, Douglass writes the following passage in *Narrative*:

Another advantage I gained in my new master was, he made no pretensions to, or profession of, religion; and this, in my opinion, was truly a great advantage. I assert most unhesitatingly, that religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid

crimes, – a justifier of the most appalling barbarity, – a sanctifier of the most hateful frauds, – and a dark shelter under, which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection. Were I to be again reduced to the chains of slavery, next to that enslavement, I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me. For of all slaveholders with whom I have ever met, the religious slaveholders are the worst. I have ever found them the meanest and basest, the most cruel and cowardly, of all others. It was my unhappy lot not only to belong to a religious slaveholder, but to live in a community of such religionists (2014, p. 47).

In this passage, Douglass is expressing a distinct critique of religion. As a result, the effect of *Narrative's* white envelope becomes apparent. As Gibson states in his article: “Frederick Douglass certainly knew that there existed the possibility – even the likelihood – that his narrative could be read as an expression of doubt and apostasy. For that reason he added an Appendix, a contrary one” (Gibson, 1990, pp. 86-87). Being sponsored by the abolitionist movement, Douglass could not risk that the reader viewed his critique of religion as directed towards the northern society. Adding the appendix in *Narrative*, Douglass thus removes the religious critique towards the North, which the passage indicates when standing by itself.

In *Bondage*, Douglass keeps the passage the same. However, having changed the appendix, there is no longer anything in the narrative that sanitizes the passage. Instead, *Bondage's* appendix emphasizes that the same critique is to apply to both southerners and northerners. Douglass is thus no longer separating the churches of the South from that of the North. As a result, Douglass's portrayed religious view in the passage differs from *Narrative*. This change is seen as the following passage for all intents and purposes is identical to *Narrative*, yet is expressing a significantly increased critique:

I assert *most unhesitatingly*, that the religion of the south – as I have observed it and proved it – is a mere covering for the most horrid crimes; the justifier of the most appalling barbarity; a sanctifier of the most hateful frauds; and a secure shelter, under which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal abominations fester and flourish (1969, p. 257).

In *Bondage*, the passage attributes the same critique towards Christians in the North as those in the South. This change expresses how Douglass increases his religious critique from

*Narrative to Bondage*. Limiting one's scholarly discussion to Douglass's first two versions, the development of Douglass's religious view would be from a sanitized view to a more critical one, as he goes from slave narrative to autobiography. In *Life*, however, Douglass removes the passage reflecting negatively on religion. Removing the passage, Douglass consequently reduces the religious critique. Coincidentally, *Life* proceeds directly to portraying one of Douglass's positive encounters with religion:

Thus elevated a little at Freeland's, the dreams called into being by that good man, Father Lawson, when in Baltimore, began to visit me again; shoots from the tree of liberty began to forth buds, and dim hopes of the future began to dawn (2008, p. 85).

Again, this passage is present in *Bondage* as well (1969, p. 264). As with the passage in New Bedford, Douglass in *Life* thus shifts the focus from critiquing religion to emphasizing how Christianity and antislavery can marry. This emphasis is seen as Douglass connects the positive experience with religion in this passage to a colored man in "Father Lawson." Tying the visits from Father Lawson to the "shoots from the tree of liberty," Douglass portrays exactly this marriage. Seeing that *Life* presents all these changes, I view Douglass's third version to advocate that his religious view has mellowed since *Bondage*. In other words, *Life* is essential for a discussion on the complete development in Douglass's religious view accurately.

Continuing with the same passage, Douglass goes further in expressing his religious critique. As the religious critique increases, so does the removal of it increasingly affect the portrayed religious view in *Life*. Continuing his writing on religious slaveholders in *Narrative*, Douglass describes an additional two religious slaveholders. Adding to the presence of religion, the men described here are reverends as well:

It was my unhappy lot not only to belong to a religious slaveholder, but to live in a community of such religionists. Very near Mr. Freeland lived the Rev. Daniel Weeden, and in the same neighborhood lived the Rev. Rigby Hopkins. These were members and ministers in the Reformed Methodist Church. Mr. Weeden owned, among others, a woman slave, whose name I have forgotten. This woman's back, for

weeks, was kept literally raw, made so by the lash of this merciless, religious wretch (2014, pp. 47-48).

As with the previous example, the characters are present in *Bondage* as well. Elaborating on the character of Rev. Daniel Weeden in *Bondage*, Douglass's writing again expresses an increase in the religious critique:

Very near my new home, on an adjoining farm, there lived the Rev. Daniel Weeden, who was both pious and cruel after the real Covey pattern. Mr. Weeden was a local preacher of the Protestant Methodist persuasion, and a most zealous supporter of the ordinances of religion, generally. This Weeden owned a woman called 'Ceal,' who was a standing proof of his mercilessness. Poor Ceal's back, always scantily clothed, was kept literally raw, by the lash of this religious man and gospel minister. The most notoriously wicked man – so called in distinction from church members – could hire hands more easily than this brute. When sent out to find a home, a slave would never enter the gates of the preacher Weeden, while a sinful sinner needed a hand (1969, p. 258).

In this passage, Douglass does more than just increase the presence of religious signifiers in his description. As Douglass goes from having forgotten the name of the woman who is victim to Weeden's mercilessness in *Narrative* to stating it in *Bondage*, Douglass increases the cruelty of the slavemaster as well. Douglass personifies the slave, reminding the reader that she is a person just like anyone else. Furthermore, Douglass states clearly in *Bondage* that Weeden's treatment of Ceal will ensure his place in Hell: "The back of his slave-woman will, in the judgement, be the swiftest witness against him." (1969, p. 259). I argue that this statement further portrays that Douglass is more confrontational in his religious critique in *Bondage*. Seeing that Douglass removes this passage in *Life*, Douglass's religious critique is thus removed as well.

Mr. Hopkins is another religious slaveholder mentioned by Douglass in the first two narratives, before being removed in *Life*. As with the previous two characters, Douglass again increases the use of religious words when describing him in *Bondage*. In *Narrative*, Douglass writes of Mr. Hopkins: "Mr. Hopkins was even worse than Mr. Weeden. His chief boast was his ability to manage slaves" (Douglass, 2014, p. 48). In the same sentence in *Bondage*,

Douglass emphasizes that Mr. Hopkins is a religious man: “This saintly Hopkins used to boast that he was the best hand to manage a negro in the country” (Douglass, 1969, p. 259).

Whereas Douglass expands his description of Mr. Weeden in *Bondage*, he is more elaborate in *Narrative* when it comes to Mr. Hopkins. Expressing how Hopkins makes sure to show his piety to the world, Douglass writes in *Narrative*:

And yet there was not man any where round, who made higher professions of religion, or was more active in his revivals, – more attentive to the class, love-feast, prayer and preaching meetings, or more devotional in his family, – that prayed earlier, later, louder, and longer, – than this same reverend slave-driver, Rigby Hopkins (Douglass, 2014, p. 48).

Although one can argue that the religious critique is highly present here, the appendix of *Narrative* “sanitizes” it. Additionally, Douglass does not only repeat the writing in *Bondage* but continues to portray an increase in the critique as he emphasizes Hopkins's religious position. Douglass furthermore includes a comparison to Covey and Weeden. Doing this, Douglass highlights how religious slaveholders professes religion, yet are blasphemous in the treatment of their slaves:

The *reverend* slaveholder could always find something of this sort, to justify him in using the lash several times during the week. Hopkins – like Covey and Weeden – were shunned by slaves who had the privilege (as many had) of finding their own masters at the end of each year; and yet, there was not a man in all that section of country, who made a louder profession of religion, than did Mr. RIGBY HOPKINS (Douglass, 1969, p. 261)

Again, the changes Douglass makes in *Bondage* expresses an increase in religious critique from *Narrative*. In other words, I agree with scholars when they portray Douglass's development in the first two narratives as such (Bennett, 2016, p. 257). However, as scholars leave out *Life* from their discussion, they consequently do not discuss the complete development in Douglass's religious critique. This view is advocated as Douglass once again removes the entire passage discussed in *Life*. In doing so, Douglass reduces the religious critique in his narrative significantly. Removing such specific critique against named slaveholders, Douglass portrays a less confrontational perspective in *Life*. Furthermore, as

these men hold positions within the Methodist church clergy, the reduced confrontational aspect applies to the Methodists as well. As these men are substantial in shaping the religious view portrayed by Douglass in his narrative, the changes in *Life* gives essential insight into the complete development of Douglass's religious critique.

The importance that the writing on religious slaveholders holds in the development of Douglass's religious critique is further visible as Douglass describes his encounter with an extraordinary cruel slave master in Baltimore. Describing this woman's two slaves in *Narrative*, Douglass writes: "...and of all the mangled and emaciated creatures I ever looked upon, these two were the most so"(2014, p. 28). Describing the same two slaves in *Bondage*, Douglass increases the emphasis on Christian hypocrisy. As a result, the same passage expresses an increased religious critique: "Of all the dejected, emaciated, mangled and excoriated creatures I ever saw, those two girls – in the refined, church going and Christian city of Baltimore – were the most deplorable" (1969, p. 148). Douglass continues to express an increased critique further on in the passage. This increase is evident as Douglass also alters his description of the woman who owns the two slaves. In *Narrative*, Douglass solely states "... but I have been an eye-witness to the cruelty of Mrs. Hamilton" (2014, p. 28). In *Bondage*, however, Douglass includes questions towards the religiousness of the conduct that he has witnessed from her:

... but I have often been an eye witness of the revolting and brutal inflictions by Mrs. Hamilton; and what lends a deeper shade to this woman's conduct, is the fact, that, almost in the very moments of her shocking outrages of humanity and decency, she would charm you by the sweetness of her voice and her seeming piety (1969, p. 149).

Including a description of Mrs. Hamilton's religiousness as "seeming piety," Douglass continues to portray a more critical view of religion in his second version. Douglass emphasizes this further as he continues to add to the passage in *Bondage*. Having described how Mrs. Hamilton would whip her two slaves, Douglass writes further of how she would act afterward, continuing to critique her religiousness: "Then the lady would go on, singing her

sweet hymns, as though her *righteous* soul were sighing for the holy realms of paradise” (1969, p. 149). Making these changes to his writing, Douglass goes from just critiquing slavery in *Narrative* to additionally critiquing religion in *Bondage*. Once again, however, Douglass removes the entire passage in *Life*. Thus, the critique that Douglass enhances in *Bondage* is removed again in *Life*. Douglass is no longer critiquing neither Baltimore nor its religious population. Furthermore, this passage is the ending of the chapter in both of Douglass’s first two narratives. As a result, Douglass does not shift the focus onto something else by removing it in *Life*. The sole effect of removing this passage is thus a reduced presence of religious critique. Nevertheless, Douglass presents a different religious view in *Life* by again removing a passage discussing a religious slaveholder. This change further expresses the inclusion of *Life* as a necessity for an accurate discussion on the complete development of Douglass’s religious view throughout his narratives. Douglas goes from tolerant to confrontational, before ending somewhere in between in *Life*.

The reason for Douglass to reduce the religious critique in *Life* is difficult to determine. Matlack affixes two characteristics, retrospective and anticlimactic, to Douglass’s writing in the third version (1979, p. 25). Although Matlack holds these characteristics to the entirety of *Life*, I view them to be applicable for the religious view specifically as well. Being older and looking back, Douglass is less bitter and thus reduces his religious critique in retrospect. Additionally, as I argue that Douglass is less confrontational in his critique in *Life*, one can view this as creating a more anticlimactic narrative. I, however, view Douglass’s incentive to reduce the religious critique a shift in focus. As slavery has been emancipated in the United States, Douglass does not have an equal incentive to criticize religious slaveholders to the same extent as in his first two narratives. While the reason to critique religion has been reduced, Douglass’s emphasis on cosmopolitanism amongst people of

African descent has increased. Thus, I make the argument that Douglass reduces the religious critique to increase the focus on the aspects discussed in this thesis's first chapter.

To summarize, the examples put forth in this chapter express the importance of including *Life*. As the changes within these examples show, Douglass's final version does much more than only add chapters to an already extended *Bondage*. I argue that the removal of religious slaveholders introduces a significant change in Douglass's narrative. Comparing the first two of Douglass's narratives, the conclusion is that Douglass develops towards a more critical view of religion in his later work. While it is true that this is the development from *Narrative* to *Bondage*, as these examples show, *Life* contrastingly does not express the same religious view. As a result, *Life* must be seen as a crucial part of any discussion on Douglass's complete development with regards to his religious view. Although the reason for Douglass to reduce the critique can be attributed to several notions, the importance of including *Life* is crucial. Without its inclusion, the resulting discussion of Douglass's development will misrepresent the view which he portrays at the end of his autobiographical writing. Having shown how Douglass reduces his religious critique both post- and pre-escape, I argue that it is evident that his religious view is less confrontational in *Life* compared to in *Bondage*. However, Douglass does not return to the apologetic view expressed by his white envelope in *Narrative*.

### **Less Critical, but Still Critiquing**

That Douglass removes several passages critiquing religion in *Life* is evident. However, Douglass's final version does not portray the same view towards religion as *Narrative* does. Seeing that Douglass removes passages discussing religion, it would be natural that *Life* and *Narrative* expressed a similar view. Nevertheless, Douglass portrays a view of religion in *Life* that places it somewhere in the middle of that portrayed in his first two narratives. This difference from *Narrative* is evident as Douglass, even though he removes passages critiquing

religion in *Life*, is still critiquing religion. He does not revert to that expressed in *Narrative*, but adds a third point of view regarding his stance on religion. Hence, I will explore how passages on religious slaveholders kept by Douglass in *Life* express a less confrontational critique than what they do in *Bondage*. That Douglass still critiques religion in *Life* is significant as it expresses development in his attitude towards Christianity. He is expressing a different view than either of his first two narratives. As a result, the inclusion of *Life* is essential when discussing religion in Douglass's narratives. Without its inclusion, the perceived religious view will misrepresent Douglass's actual view at the end of his autobiographical career.

Anyone familiar with Douglass's narratives should agree that the passage in Baltimore, which makes Douglass realize the importance of knowing how to read and write, is central to Douglass's narrative. It is the ability to read and write that eventually grants him his freedom, especially in his first two versions. In *Bondage*, Douglass includes religious critique in this passage, illustrating his emphasis on expressing this critique in his second version. Douglass writes of how he became aware of the importance of these skills in *Narrative* as he overheard the discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Auld on Mrs. Auld teaching Douglass to read. In *Narrative*, Douglass thus retells what he heard:

'If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. Now,' said he, 'if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontent and unhappy.' (2014, p. 27).

Describing what he overheard in *Narrative*, Douglass portrays no distinct religious critique. Thus, this passage solely made Douglass understand that education was the "pathway to freedom" (p. 27). However, Douglass makes changes when depicting the same discussion in *Bondage* and *Life*. Instead of it being the act of reading in general, Douglass changes it in

*Bondage* to “if you teach that nigger – speaking of myself – how to read the bible, there will be no keeping him;’ ‘it would forever unfit him for the duties of a slave” (1969, p. 146). As a result, the focus shifts to it being the act of reading the *bible*, and not reading in of itself. With this alteration, Douglass makes the passage in *Bondage* emphasize the hypocrisy amongst the Christian slaveholding population. Mr. Auld, being a Christian slaveholder, knows that the Christian faith tells him that he cannot keep Douglass a slave if Douglass were to be of Christian faith too. Notably, Douglass emphasizes this view in *Life* as well. He even states it more explicitly: “If he learns to read the Bible it will forever unfit him to be a slave” (2008, p. 42). Rewriting the sentence, Douglass makes the mentioning of the bible no longer an addition, but rather the focus of the sentence. Thus, *Life* further emphasizes the notion introduced in *Bondage*. It is Christianity, not reading, that makes Douglass unfit to be a slave in Mr. Auld’s eyes. Although Douglass emphasizes this in his latter two versions, he also continues his writing in both of his latter works by stating: “‘ If you learn him now to read, he’ll want to know how to write; and, this accomplished, he’ll be running away with himself.’” (1969, p. 146; 2008, p. 42). In other words, Douglass is still expressing that education is essential to the achievement of freedom. However, making the bible that which is learned, Douglass simultaneously critiques Mr. Auld as a Christian.

Nevertheless, it is the fact that Douglass portrays this view in his final version as well that I emphasize. As I showed in the previous subchapter is several passages describing cruel religious slaveholders removed from *Life*, in turn expressing a reduced religious critique. Keeping the religious aspect of the critique towards Mr. Auld, Douglass consequently does not gloss over the existence of sacrilegious slaveholders in *Life*. Instead, this advocates that Douglass directs the critique towards a select few, essential characters in his final narrative. As a result, I argue that Douglass, even though he reduces the presence of religious critique, still critiques religion in *Life*. Douglass’s final version thus represents a religious view less

confrontational than *Bondage*, yet more critical than *Narrative*. Conducting a scholarly discussion on the development of Douglass's religious view, *Life* consequently expresses a third position. This position makes *Life* essential when discussing the complete development in Douglass's religious view.

A statement made by Douglass in his final two versions further advocates the importance of including *Life* when discussing his religious view. Ending a passage on actions done by Douglass while owned by Master Thomas, Douglass states: "But my kind readers are, probably, less concerned about my opinions, than about that which more nearly touches my personal experience; albeit, my opinions have in some sort, been formed by that experience" (1969, p. 191; 2008, p. 58). As Douglass's religious critique in the preceding passage differs between the two narratives, the experience forming his opinions consequently alters as well. In other words, Douglass articulates that his opinions towards religion are different in *Life*, as the experience with religion that formed his opinions is different in *Life* than it is in *Bondage*. Discussing the morality of stealing food from Master Thomas, Douglass states in *Bondage*:

To be sure, this was stealing, according to the law and gospel I heard from St. Michael's pulpit; but I had already begun to attach less importance to what dropped from that quarter, on that point, while, as yet, I retained my reverence for religion (1969, p. 189).

Douglass writes the same in *Life*, except for "...while, as yet, I retained my reverence for religion." I argue that by removing this, *Life* expresses Douglass's reduced confrontational view of religion. Whereas he needs to proclaim that he would later depart from religion in *Bondage*, Douglass has no such necessity in *Life*. However, although Douglass alters the directness of his religious critique, he is still criticizing religion. That Douglass expresses critique in *Life* as well as in *Bondage* is evident as he writes of his master's wife:

This was so, when she knew we were nearly half-starved; and yet with saintly air would she kneel with her husband and pray each morning that a merciful God would

'bless them in basket and store, and save them at last in His kingdom' (1969, p. 190; 2008, p. 58).

As Douglass maintains the use of religious signifiers in *Life*, he expresses the contrast between the professed faith of his master's wife and her actions in both versions. Keeping the quote in *Life*, Douglass further expresses that even though he removes some slaveholders from his final version, he still highlights the sacrilegious behavior of those which he keeps. As a result, I argue that even though Douglass reduces the directness and extent of religious critique in *Life*, he still, to some degree, portrays a critique of religion. Douglass's portrayal of religious slaveholders thus advocates the importance of including *Life*. Not only does it show how Douglass reduces the amount of religious critique, but it additionally expresses how *Life* expresses a third point of view towards religion. As a result, I argue that this advocates the importance of including *Life* when discussing Douglass and religion.

Further expressing the need to proclaim his religious view in *Bondage*, Douglass writes: "I shall here make a profession of faith which may shock some, offend others, and be dissented from by all" (1969, p. 190). Coincidentally expressing that he does not portray the same confrontational view in his final version, Douglass removes the statement in *Life*. Advocating this view is that what Douglass is introducing with this statement is a religious critique towards slaveholders. As a result, the removal of this statement in *Life* further expresses that Douglass simultaneously keeps the critique and reduces its ramification in his final version. Douglass is still expressing a critique towards slaveholders, but not one so confronting that it will "shock some, offend others, and be dissented from by all" (1969, p. 190).

The writing that follows the statement mentioned above additionally portrays a different perspective on religion in *Life*. Initially, Douglass ensures the reader in both of his last two versions that he views the laws of religion to stand equal to the laws of man: "Slaveholders have made it almost impossible for the slave to commit any crime, known

either to the laws of God or to the laws of man” (1969, p. 191; 2008, p. 58). However, continuing his critique of religion, Douglass states in *Bondage*:

Slaveholders I hold to be individually and collectively responsible for all the evils which grow out of the horrid relation and I believe they will be so held at the judgment, in the sight of a just God. Make a man a slave, and you rob him of moral responsibility (1969, p. 191).

By emphasizing that the judgment is dependent on a “just” God, Douglass continues his questioning of Christianity, similar to that which he portrays towards “the refined, church going and Christian city of Baltimore” (1969, p. 148). However, the critique towards Christianity in Baltimore is significantly less present in *Life*. Consequently, Douglass writes in *Life*: “...and I believed they would be so held in the sight of God” (2008, p. 58). Removing the premise of a “just” God in *Life*, Douglass is no longer antagonizing Christians by insinuating that God is not always just. In other words, Douglass’s change in writing further expresses that his critique in *Life* is directed at the religiousness of the slaveholders, and not Christianity itself. Although this portrays a similar point of view as *Narrative*, Douglass’s change in the appendix ensures that *Life* still critiques religion. Thus, Douglass continuously portrays a less confronting religious critique in *Life*, highlighting the mellowed religious view held in his final version. As this difference offers the third step to Douglass’s development within his religious view, the continued alteration further expresses the importance of including *Life* when discussing this development.

One final example of how *Life* portrays a different religious view than *Bondage* is seen in the very first mentioning of Douglass’s religious learning. Writing *Bondage*, Douglass expresses that religion makes slavery a crime.

I was just as well aware of the unjust, unnatural and murderous character of slavery, when nine years old, as I am now. Without any appeal to books, to laws, or to authorities of any kind, it was enough to accept God as a father, to regard slavery as a crime (1969, p. 134).

This writing expresses the notion which Ernest highlights in his article; that Douglass could not separate Christianity from slavery (2009, p. 63). As Douglass alters the passage in *Life*, however, I argue that he consequently alters the religious aspect: “Without any appeal to books, to laws, or to authorities of any kind, to regard God as ‘Our Father,’ condemned slavery as a crime” (2008, p. 38). In *Bondage*, Douglass expresses that anyone of Christian fate should view slavery as a crime. In *Life*, however, Douglass alters the passage by changing the writing from “a father” to “Our Father.” Making this change, Douglass makes *Life* critique specifically the misinterpretation of Christianity in the South and not Christianity as a whole. The Southern Christians did not view the term “Our Father” to include slaves, as they kept Christianity from them. Douglass highlights this by writing of how Mr. Wright Fairbanks, Mr. Garrison West, and Master Thomas breaks up Douglass’s Sabbath school (1969, p. 200; 2008, p. 62; 2014, p. 37). That southern Christians adhered to this loophole has furthermore already been expressed by the conversation between the Auld’s (1969, p. 146; 2008, p. 42). Denying Douglass any religious teaching in both *Bondage* and *Life*, Douglass portrays the Auld’s view as one of God as “a father.” However, as Douglass changes the wording in *Life*, he solely aims his critique towards those who do not view God as “Our Father.” Thus in *Life*, Douglass does not critique the northern Christians who do see God as both their own and Douglass’s father.

Comparing the religious critique in *Bondage* and *Life*, it is clear that Douglass still critiques religion in the latter. However, as I have shown in this subchapter, Douglass portrays his religious view as less confrontational than he does in *Bondage*. Thus, any discussion on the complete development of Douglass’s religious view has to include his final version. Without it, Douglass’s view goes from apologetic in *Narrative* to confrontational and antagonizing in *Bondage*. Although both of these views are correct, it does not accurately portray the complete development. *Life* portrays the third point of view in the development,

putting Douglass's religious view between that expressed in his first two versions. In other words, a discussion excluding *Life* will end up expressing a misrepresented version of Douglass's full development on religion.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I set out to show that the religious change made by Douglass in *Life* offers essential insight into the complete development of his religious view. I have argued that without the inclusion of *Life*, a discussion on the development of Douglass's religious view in his narrative is misrepresenting the complete development. Throughout four subchapters, I have demonstrated how *Life's* writing introduces key changes to Douglass's discussion on religion. Using John Ernest's article "Crisis and Faith in Douglass's Work," I presented the conclusions which an analysis without *Life* advocates. Comparing these conclusions to those expressed when including *Life*, the implications of not including *Life* are evident. There are significant alterations made to the narrative by Douglass in his final version, both post-, and pre-escape. As shown does these changes both remove and alter the religious critique portrayed in *Life*. As a result, *Life* portrays a different religious view than the first two versions. Being more mellow than in *Bondage*, yet more critical than that in *Narrative*, the religious view of *Life* resides in between the previous two. Thus, I view *Life* to represent the third step in the development of Douglass's religious view. Not including *Life* when discussing Douglass's religious development then leads to a wrongful depiction of said development. Douglass states that the incidents he writes about in *Narrative*, *Bondage*, and *Life* shaped his identity. The fact that he changes the incidents in *Life* then consequently changes the shaping of his identity to be less critical in his religious views. As a result, as shown in this chapter, a discussion on Douglass's discourse on race and identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cannot be conducted without the inclusion of *Life*.

## Final Conclusion

My goal with this thesis is to express how *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* gives new understanding into the development in Frederick Douglass's writing on race and identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, as Douglass's final version expresses this new insight, I argued that it deserves the same attention scholars have given his first two narratives. The lack of focus given to Douglass's final version has resulted in a gap in scholarship on the development of Frederick Douglass's discourse on topics such as independence, community, and religion, topics I have discussed throughout this thesis. To give the evidence for my thesis statement, I close-read all three versions of Douglass's works and studied the changes and similarities between them.

In the first chapter, I explored Douglass's break from being a "Self-made man" in *Life*. Scholars of Douglass view him to resemble a "Negro Benjamin Franklin" in his narratives, a result of him depicting himself as "Self-Made" in *Narrative*, as well as depicting himself with European ancestry. Studying his writing on the topics of heritage, the portrayal of other colored men, and his view on the role of the colored community, I found that Douglass significantly alters this depiction in *Life*. As Douglass changes both his heritage and the importance of other colored characters in his life, his writing no longer attributes his freedom to the Benjamin Franklin template. Coincidentally, as Douglass breaks from the template of Franklin, his view on the importance of the colored community is further emphasized. Juxtaposing the view on these topics portrayed by Douglass's writing in his first two narratives with that in *Life*, it becomes clear that his discourse is significantly changed.

In the second chapter, I explored Douglass's writing on religion in *Life* because Douglass's religious identity is a central part of his identity. Additionally, Douglass's religious view not only shapes his opinions in his narratives but also affects how he writes of

his experiences. Douglass goes from writing under abolitionist sponsorship in *Narrative* to writing the story as he saw it fit to tell it in *Bondage*. This change resulted in him going from being apologetic for any presumed critique of Christianity, to a direct, confrontational critique of religion. Comparing these two versions alone, Douglass's discourse on religion expresses a very contrasting development. In *Life*, however, Douglass reduces his critique of Christianity and portrays a much more nuanced view of religion. Thus, the writing on religion in *Life* not only gives insight into the continued development in Douglass's discourse on identity but also expresses why *Life* is central to a correct understanding of the development. Without *Life*, the development in Douglass's religious critique moves towards being more critical as he breaks from Garrison. This development, however, does not match the development of *Life*. Thus, to correctly portray the complete development of Douglass's religious discourse, one has to include *Life*.

Combining the findings from these two chapters, I argue that *Life* is essential for understanding the complete development of Douglass's discourse on race and identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In *Life*, Douglass both adds new writing and removes old. He alters significant notions that both, directly and indirectly, changes his discourse on race and identity from that portrayed in the first two versions. Changing his heritage, Douglass directly alters his place within the notion of race. Changing how he critiques religion, Douglass more indirectly alters his religious identity. Emphasizing his perspective on the importance of a colored community, Douglass coincidentally alters how he portrays other colored as well. African Americans should not be individualistic. Instead, they are dependent on each other to uplift the colored community as a whole. All of these notions are portrayed differently in Douglass's first two versions, either in part or entirely. In sum, one cannot depict the complete development in Douglass's view on race and identity correctly without *Life*.

## **Present-day Advocacy for a Complete Understanding of Douglass's Discourse**

The importance of a correct portrayal of Douglass's development is ever still relevant. It goes beyond the issues that come with teaching Douglass with *Narrative* as canon. The ideas attached to Douglass by politicians on both sides of the political spectrum in the United States express a misconception tied to Douglass's discourse. When Douglass is brought up by prominent characters in the U.S., there is a disagreement over Douglass's legacy.

This disagreement over who Douglass was can be seen in an article from *The Atlantic* in 2018. One of the notions addressed in this article is that both the Democratic and Republican parties try to claim Douglass as reflecting their values. Expressing the Republicans attempt at claiming Douglass, the article states:

When a statue memorializing him was unveiled at the United States Capitol in 2013, members of the party of Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell sported buttons that read FREDERICK DOUGLASS WAS A REPUBLICAN. More recently, the Republican National Committee issued a statement joining President Donald Trump 'in honoring Douglass' lifelong dedication to the principles that define [the Republican] Party and enrich our nation.' (Kennedy, 2018).

Kennedy further defines one of the principles: "Conservatives praise his individualism, which sometimes verged on social Darwinism" (Kennedy, 2018). However, the view of Douglass having a "lifelong dedication" to these principles is contradicted in *Life*. As this thesis shows, Douglass moves away from the individualism in *Life* by breaking from the Franklinian template. Douglass might have been a republican, but in *Life* he reflects the antithesis of that "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" individualism. As Douglass highlights his dependence on luck in achieving success, the same can be said for any notion of social Darwinism. In other words, without Douglass's complete development, people misrepresent his views.

As Kennedy continues, he points out that certain aspects of Douglass's journey reduce his position amongst African Americans. Especially problematic is the role which the abolitionists played in creating Douglass's career as a speaker and writer:

Without their assistance, he would not have become the symbol of oppressed blackness in the minds of antislavery whites, and without the prestige he received from his white following, he would not have become black America's preeminent spokesman. That whites were so instrumental in furthering Douglass's career bothers black nationalists who are haunted by the specter of white folks controlling or unduly influencing putative black leaders (Kennedy, 2018).

*Narrative*, being a slave narrative, fits this notion. However, as this thesis lays forth, *Life* separates Douglass's writing from the "unduly influence" of white abolitionists. This view further shows that if the development of Douglass's discourse on race and identity in *Life* is considered at the same level as *Narrative* and *Bondage*, Douglass's legacy would not be distorted by these misconceptions. The same argument applies to concerns connected to Douglass's second marriage. Some argue that marrying a white woman in Helen Pitts discredited Douglass's position in the colored community: "For knowledgeable black nationalists, Douglass's second marriage continues to vex his legacy. Some give him a pass for what they perceive as an instance of apostasy, while others remain unforgiving" (Kennedy, 2018). Again, the complete development of Douglass's discourse on race and identity reveals that Douglass's emphasis on his black heritage and his reliance on the colored community increases at the end of his life.

If *Life* were part of the Frederick Douglass canon, there would not be the same ambiguity around Douglass's view on these central issues. This notion expresses the misconceptions that come from not including *Life* in the discussion on Douglass. Additionally, as these misconceptions are made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they also express why there is a need for a reassessment of the complete understanding of Douglass's discourse 139 years after the publication of his final version.

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