

The Journey to Freedom and Humanization in Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

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Abstract

This study deals with the first stage in Douglass's humanization process. It centers on Douglass's childhood and early youth, his own experience with slavery, and his own self-education. As a former slave Douglass not only describes his experience with slavery but also exposes and describes the inner workings of the slavery system and how it dehumanizes both slave and master. In addition, he describes the strategy he develops for attaining his freedom. Accordingly, throughout his career as a writer, an orator, and a politician, Douglass devoted himself to the abolition of slavery. The study discusses post-colonial concepts such as power, ignorance or lack of knowledge, marginalization, othering and stereotyping, and finally identity conflict as representatives of the writer's lack of freedom and humanization as well as negative forces to be overcome by the writer in his journey towards freedom and humanization. The study also discusses how the theme of ignorance or lack of knowledge as demonstrated in Douglass's book confirms the destructive power of denying education to a group of people. The study concludes that Douglass's journey from slavery to freedom underwent many obstacles. However, Douglass managed to overcome these obstacles and liberate himself physically and psychologically through a process of self-education as well as physical resistance.

Key Words: slavery؛ freedom؛ humanization؛ self-education؛ knowledge.

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Autobiography as a literary genre, is a form of nonfiction that can provide insight into the author's thoughts, feelings, and perspective on his own life. Frederick Douglass was a key figure in the development of the autobiography as a literary genre, particularly with his work "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave." Published in 1845, his work was not only a personal account of his life as a slave but also a powerful indictment of slavery and an effective call for abolition. This study tries to deal with Douglass's work from a post-colonial perspective. It uses post-colonial concepts such as power, ignorance or lack of knowledge, marginalization, stereotyping, and identity conflict in the analysis of Douglass's work. The study is mainly concerned with highlighting the relationship between knowledge and freedom. It tries to prove the strong relationship between gaining knowledge and education and attaining freedom and humanization

This study discusses the first stage in Douglass's humanization process. It centers on Douglass's childhood and early youth, his own experience with slavery, and his own self-education. It discusses post-colonial concepts such as power, ignorance or lack of knowledge, marginalization, stereotyping, and finally identity conflict as representatives of the writer's lack of freedom and humanization as well as negative forces to be overcome by the writer in his journey towards freedom and humanization.

The Power of the Master

The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the [Orientals] is very strong indeed...the nexus of knowledge and power creating 'the Oriental' and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore...an intellectual matter of some very obvious importance. (Said 27)

The power of the master is considered the first obstacle that Douglass has to overcome in his journey towards freedom and humanization. As a matter of fact, the power of the master or the slave-holder to own other people, enslave and subjugate them as portrayed in Douglass's book can be compared to the power of the colonizer who subjugates the natives. Such is the act of any oppressors in the dominant culture who try to "define and control oppressed people, their identities, and their roles, attempting to "silence" them through education and other institutions" (Hanna et al. 431). To control and manipulate their slaves, slaveholders used their power and authority over their slaves in an irresponsible way. Therefore, in Douglass's book Douglass attacks slave-holders and their use of irresponsible power to subjugate their slaves and demonstrates how such irresponsible power has a destructive effect on both slaves and slave-holders. Thus one of the main objectives of Douglass's book is to expose the inner workings of slavery and how it dehumanizes both slaves and slave-holders.

Using their power, slaveholders gave themselves the right to keep their slaves ignorant and illiterate and to mislead their consciousness. They also gave themselves the right to use systematic violence and aggression against their slaves as well as to break all their family ties. Thus one of the main strategies that masters use to control their slaves is, as Lloyd Garrison puts it, "to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind." (Garrison 5).

First, to "cripple their intellects" and "darken their minds", slave-holders or masters had the right and the power to keep their slaves ignorant and illiterate so that they can maintain them as slaves forever. When Douglass's new mistress Sophia Auld began to teach Douglass the alphabet and assisted him in learning to spell words, her husband immediately prevented her

telling her that “learning would spoil the best nigger in the world....it would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable and of no value to his master....It would make him discontented and unhappy” (Douglass 44).

Thus slave-holders believe that a slave must cultivate complete thoughtlessness and put aside his intellectual nature to achieve contentment in slavery. He must believe that he was born to be a slave and that his only role in life is to serve his master. This target can be achieved easily when he is kept illiterate or ignorant or as Douglass puts it “when he ceases to be a man.” Douglass states:

I have found that to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason....He must be made to feel that slavery is right, and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man. (99)

Second, to "debase their moral nature", slaveholders had the right and power to use aggression and physical abuse against their slaves. According to Clark, the portrayal of violence and suffering experienced by the slaves became a popular tool for the anti-slavery movement. Therefore, the northern abolitionists eagerly shared these stories to raise awareness (465). Similarly, the detailed description of the living conditions on the home plantation of Colonel Lloyd is intended to reveal the dehumanized status and the brutal treatment of black slaves as well as to affect the white reader. Slaves were treated badly: whipped, beaten, sometimes starved, and even murdered. The living conditions in the home plantation were utterly inhumane. Slaves got very few clothes throughout the year, and these garments were not warm enough for winter. They also got one pair of yarn stockings and one pair of shoes. However, children got even less since they did not work in the

field. They were only given two linen shirts per year, and if these did not last the entire year, they ran around naked. As for sleeping arrangements, they were terrible as well. Slaves did not have beds to lie on but only a coarse blanket. Adults just slept on the cold floor, scattered, covering themselves with the coarse blanket (Douglass 22-23).

The cruelty of both masters and overseers was very common on the home plantations. However, overseers were meaner than masters themselves. Douglass, as an eyewitness and a victim as well, gives many accounts of floggings, beatings, and whippings of slaves carried out by masters and overseers sparing no women or children. One of the most important scenes of slave beating in Douglass's text is the scene in which Douglass, while a young child, witnesses the brutal whipping of Aunt Hester by Captain Antony. Douglass recounts that this whipping happened as a result of Aunt Hester's disobedience of her master's orders and her keeping a relationship with a young slave contrary to her master's will. Captain Antony's revenge for the disobedience of Aunt Hester is described by young Douglass in the following way:

Her arms were stretched up at their full length so that she stood upon the ends of her toes....and after rolling up his sleeves, he commenced to lay on the heavy cow skin, and soon the worm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor. (20)

Physical violence on the plantation was regular and very common however, Douglass chooses important incidents that he describes in a detailed manner. Of these incidents is the one that occurred to a female slave by her overseer Mr. Severe. The woman has children and the beating of her took place in front of her children. "I have seen him whip a woman," describes Douglass, "causing the blood to run half an hour at the time;

and this, too, in the midst of her crying children, pleading for their mother's release. He seemed to take pleasure in manifesting his fiendish barbarity” (23-24).

Another account of violence and physical abuse narrated by Douglass is that of old Barney. Old Barney and his son were in charge of the well-being of Colonel Lloyd's horses. According to Douglass any slight inattention of old Barney and his son to these horses was unexcused and could be faced by the severest punishment. “[No] excuse could shield them if the colonel only suspected any want of attention to his horses- a supposition which he frequently indulged... (Douglass 29). The scene of the whipping of old Barney was very effective indeed. Douglass depicts the inferior, weak, and humiliated Barney on the ground on his knees and, above him, the superior white master standing strong and powerful. Douglass, thus, juxtaposes white power and supremacy and black powerlessness and inferiority: “I have seen Colonel Lloyd,” states Douglass, “make old Barney, a man between fifty and sixty years of age, uncover his bald head, kneel down upon the cold, damp ground, and receive upon his naked and toil-worn shoulders more than thirty lashes at the time” (30). According to Waldo Martin Douglass’s repeated use of white power and black powerlessness functions as a means to explore the dynamic between blacks and whites, and to criticize “ those with a vested interest in the continuation of the uneven power relationship” (124), that is to mean the Southern white slave-holders.

It is worth mentioning that such cruelty and physical abuse were not restricted to the plantation and the overseers. When Douglass was moved to Baltimore and rested there for some time, he witnessed a woman named Mrs. Hamilton abuse her two slaves; Henrietta and Mary. Mrs. Hamilton was very cruel and whipped them continuously. She used to sit in her chair in the middle of the room with a cow skin in her hand. Whenever

the girls went past her, she would hit them and order them to go faster. Then she would go on singing her hymns. In addition to these continuous beatings, they were almost kept starved (Douglass 46).

Through Douglass's detailed description of the brutal whipping of slaves, one can observe that violence and physical abuse were deliberate and systematic. It was used to oppress the slaves physically and mentally and hence, to fully subjugate and decline the humanity and the moral nature of the slaves. In all such scenes, Douglass juxtaposes the absolute power of the master with the powerlessness and helplessness of the slave; white supremacy with black inferiority.

Third, to "obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind", masters or slave-holders had the right and power to break up all family ties of the slaves so that slaves be encircled only by a master-slave relationship. Harris Chander argues that a prominent aspect of Douglass's book is to expose the destructive impact of slavery on familial bonds taking his own example as someone who never knew his father and barely knew his mother (102). Accordingly, there was not much family life for slaves. There was little bond between blood relatives. Slaves did not know their fathers and had a very slight connection with their mothers. They also did not know their siblings. It was normal for families to be separated. Children were often taken from their mothers and were raised by their grandmothers and that was the case of Douglass.

Douglass for instance, was raised by his grandmother his first seven years. He did not know his siblings for he had never seen them before he went to the plantation. He did not know what they were to him as slavery had made them strangers. Douglass knew nothing of his father. All he knew was that his father might have been a white man. As for his mother, he was not attached to her and had a very vague recollection of her. He

was separated from her when he was just an infant. Douglass only remembers her visits to the plantation which were mostly during the night and for very short periods. She worked for Mr. Stewart who lived twelve miles from Colonel Lloyd's plantation. Since slave women did not get the day off to visit children, his mother walked back and forth during the night only to see him. Soon after Douglass moved to the plantation, his mother died. He was not allowed to see her "during her illness, at her death, or burial" (Douglass 17). Douglass describes how on hearing of his mother's death, he was not very sad or regretful; she was a stranger to him:

She was gone long before I knew anything about it. Never having enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender, and her watchful care, I received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger. (17)

Concerning marital life, slaves could court other slaves but they were not able to get married legally. The master was the only one who could decide whether a slave got married. However, these marriages were not legally binding because if a husband and a wife were separated at the auction block, then they might never see each other again. At the auction, friends, families, husbands, and wives could be separated for life. Children were taken from their mothers, and siblings were torn apart, never to see each other again.

As for the harmful, corruptive, and dehumanizing effects of slavery on slaveholders, Douglass gives an excellent remark of Mrs. Sophia Auld. When Douglass was ten years old he was sent to Baltimore to serve Mr. and Mrs. Auld. Mrs. Auld is introduced as a woman of deep sympathy whose passions are not yet corrupted by slave-holding. At the beginning of his servitude, Douglass describes his new mistress stating: "My

new mistress proved to be all she appears when I first met her at the door,--a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself. . . Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music” (43-44).

Accordingly, Douglass suggests that Mrs. Auld’s state of never being a slave-holder before is the reason for her good-natured character. She simply does not know how to behave with slaves, and what is appropriate and what is not. She does not censor her own emotions nor does she demand emotional censorship from her slaves. For example, she does not “deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face” (Douglass 43). However, over time, Douglass witnessed how she quickly became socialized into the norms of slavery and turned into a cruel slave-holder. In other words, Mrs. Auld’s behavior towards Douglass changed when she learned from her husband to be a proper slave-holder. Hence, “ that cheerful eye,” Douglass comments, “under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon” (44).

When she was asked by Douglass to teach him the alphabet at the beginning of his servitude, Mrs. Auld kindly accepted. She began to teach him but soon was rebuked and prevented by her husband who badly opposed such an action. Over time and under the influence of slave-holding, Mrs. Auld came to outdo her husband in cruelty. As Douglass remarks, “She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better” (48). Thus Douglass’s point is to demonstrate how Mrs. Auld, under the influence of slavery and slave-holding, changed from a kind-hearted woman into a cruel one.

In short, Douglass argues that the slavery system in general and the irresponsible power in particular have corruptive and dehumanizing impacts on everyone related whether slaves or slave-holders. Hanna and others express the same idea when they refer to “the tragic and disastrous result of oppression that it leads to the degradation and dehumanization of all concerned. Both oppressors and oppressed need to recover their humanity” (436). Slaves suffer continuously from imposed ignorance and illiteracy, systematic physical abuse and aggression, and family breaking. Such suffering certainly dehumanizes and destructs them physically and spiritually transforming them into brutes. On the other hand, slaveholders, as illustrated in the example of Mrs. Auld, are also dehumanized and transformed into brutes under the influence of slavery and slave-holding. Douglass thus not only condemns slaveholders but condemns the entire slavery system also.

To conclude, one can say that the theme of the master’s power is central in Douglass’s book. Through a vivid portrayal and personal experiences, Douglass exposes the many-sided nature of this power which destroys the slaves’ lives physically, psychologically, emotionally, and economically. Therefore, the slave masters in Douglass’s novel emerge as not only oppressors but also as symbols of a deeply unjust system that dehumanizes individuals and destroys the moral fabric of society.

It is worth mentioning here that for power and oppression to prevail for a long time, a pre-condition of ignorance or lack of knowledge among slaves must exist as an ignorant slave is an easy-controlled one. He is taught that slavery is right so he does not think or consider his state of enslavement as bad. The next section discusses this point.

Ignorance or Lack of Knowledge

The second obstacle Douglass has to overcome during his journey towards freedom and humanization is ignorance and lack of knowledge. Officially, slaves were not allowed to read as the law prohibited education among slaves in every state in the American Union where slavery existed. Teaching slaves is punished by imprisonment, fine, or the death penalty. JanMohamed argues that the lack of Knowledge of the enslaved individual has been intentionally created, controlled, and restricted within the sphere of the master's knowledge. This has enabled the master to establish dominant and oppressive systems meant to suppress and deny the humanity of the slave (152). Accordingly, many African Americans believed that slavery was their purpose in life and that they were not able to participate in society except as workers for white people. However, there are instances, as in Douglass's case, where slaves managed to learn to read contrary to their masters' will.

When Douglass's new mistress Sophia Auld began to teach Douglass the alphabet and assisted him in learning to spell words, her husband immediately prevented her telling her that it is "unlawful as well as unsafe to teach a slave to read...if you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell" (Douglass 44). Thus, masters believe that literacy will spoil a good, hardworking slave. Through literacy, slaves will develop an identity which is freedom from slavery as well as from ignorance. They may start feeling that they are unfit for slave duties. They also may question their masters' right to own them as slaves. Therefore, slaveholders encourage their slaves to be thoughtless which makes them to some extent "person-less or being-less" (Norman 24), so that they would "detect no inconsistencies in slavery", believing that "slavery is right" (Douglass 99). Douglass expresses this idea when he states:

I have found that to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason....He must be made to feel that slavery is right, and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man. (99)

Slaveholders also keep their slaves ignorant of basic facts such as their birthdays and even their parental background. Thus it is very common for slaves not to know their birthdays; they would estimate what year they were born and count from there. They also often have imprecise notions of who their parents are. Here, lies clearly the power of slavery to dehumanize its subjects. With this uncertainty of age, parentage, and lack of any root or identity, young Douglass could not know or say who he was. Thus, "Out of this nothingness, this non-identity, Douglass must forge his own character and sense of himself" (Matlack 21). Douglass's psychological pain of the uncertainty of his age appears when he reflects saying: "A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege" (15). Even his name was given to him by a white master. This practice of withholding the basic facts of birth dates and the identity of the father as well as the separation from the mother is meant by slaveholders to create a slave with a distorted identity that is easily controlled.

Slaveholders also make use of the slaves' ignorance by making them feel that slavery is good and liberty or freedom is bad. Their strategy is to "disgust their slaves with freedom, by plunging them into the lowest depths of dissipation" (Douglass 80) and letting them see only the abuse of freedom. Douglass tells how the masters keep down "the spirit of insurrection" by

encouraging drunken beings on holidays, "a dose of vicious dissipation, artfully labeled with the name of liberty" (80).

To conclude, one can say that the theme of ignorance and lack of knowledge as reflected in Douglass's book confirms the destructive power of denying education to a group of people. It shows how lack of knowledge is imposed deliberately on the slaves to guarantee the domination of the oppressive systems. Douglass's story, however, serves as a testimony to the transformative power of knowledge and education which can liberate individuals from oppression and inspire them to advocate for justice and equality.

Marginalization is another difficulty from which Douglass suffered in his journey toward freedom and humanization. In his book, Douglass depicts the kinds of neglect and negation to which he and his fellow slaves were subjected. The following part discusses examples of neglect and negation such as Lack of legal marriage, lack of recourse, and lack of jobs which were restricted to whites only.

Marginalization

The study of colonial discourse, directly released by work such as Said's, has, however, blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoken for. (Spivak 1993)

Marginalization as a post-colonial concept is a common feature of African-American literature in general and African-American autobiographies in particular. As a minority group, African Americans are treated as marginalized by their white oppressors in the same way as the colonized subjects are treated by their colonizers. They both suffer neglect and negation and seek a chance to speak or be spoken for. Therefore, the slave's necessity to counteract the master's effort to negate him

becomes just as essential for the slave to express himself in speech or writing as it is for him to overpower the fear of real death (JanMohamed 153).

Marginalization acts as one of the many obstructions that Douglass has to overcome on his way to freedom and humanization. As a former slave, Douglass not only relates his own experience and suffering with slavery but acts as a spokesman for his fellow slaves also. Actually, he depicts himself as unique, yet, on the other hand, as a representative figure. He displays his journey as a quest for freedom driven by internal strength rather than community support. At the same time, he positions himself as a model for other slaves to follow. (Morgan 79-80). Slaves, as depicted by Douglass, are dehumanized and treated as property or things and sometimes like animals that do not have any rights of any kind. They are denied family names, birth dates, and legal marriage. Slaves are sold and bought at the auction block like objects and animals. They are inheritable within the family of their masters. Also, some jobs are restricted to whites only, and black people, even free, do not have the right to obtain them.

The first example of marginalization as seen in Douglass's book is that slaves are denied legal marriage. Slaves can court other slaves but there is no law for them to be able to get married. The slave has no right, and the master could decide whether he gets married, and if so, then when, and how long the marriage lasts. However, these marriages are not legally binding for a husband and a wife can be separated at the auction block and they might never see each other again.

Another example of marginalization is best seen in the treatment of the slaves as mere property or chattel. They have the same rank as animals and objects and can be valued, divided, and inherited by the family of the slaveholder. Douglass relates that after the death of his old master, Captain

Antony, he was sent, at once, to the plantation to be valued with the other property of Captain Antony. The incident had a torturing effect on Douglass reminding him of his miserable condition as a slave. Douglass states: " Here again my feeling rose up in detestation of slavery. I had now a new conception of my degraded condition" (54). Describing the incident of the valuation of the property of Captain Antony, Douglass states that "men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine" (55).

Another instance that shows how slaves are viewed and treated as mere property is that of Douglass when he is sent to serve Mr. and Mrs. Auld in Baltimore. Douglass is presented as a gift or a toy to their son Thomas, who is told by his mother that "there was his Freddy"(Douglass 41), and that Freddy will take care of him. Thomas may have become attached to Douglass out of love for his "present" or "toy" or because he now has another child to play with. Thus by introducing Thomas to "his Freddy", Mrs. Auld is establishing for her son that the job of the human chattel; Freddy is to provide care and affection.

Another kind of marginalization that Douglass bitterly attacks in his book concerns the slaves' lack of recourse when they are badly treated. Slaves are unable to receive justice. Douglass tells of four incidents in which slaves are killed by their masters; two are shot, one is killed with a hatchet, and the other is beaten to death. Though it is illegal for masters to murder their slaves, they never be tried for their crimes. Slaves are not able to bring murderous masters to court or even to claim any legal standing whatsoever as they are not allowed to give testimony against whites in court. Douglass notes that "killing a slave, or any colored person, in Talbot County, Maryland, is not treated as a crime, either by the courts or the community" (36).

One of the famous examples of killing the slaves that Douglass provides is the murder of Demby by the overseer Mr. Gore. Mr. Gore whipped one of his slaves called Demby, and the slave, trying to escape more stripes, ran away and jumped into a creek. The slave was warned that if he did not come out he would be shot. After three calls from Mr. Gore to which Demby did not respond, "Mr. Gore then, without consultation or deliberation with anyone, not even given Demby an additional call, raised his musket to his face, taking deadly aim at his standing victim, and in an instant poor Demby was no more" (Douglass 35).

Douglass relates that the crime was not submitted to the court or even received any judicial investigation. As the only witnesses of the crime were slaves who did not have the right to make a suit or even testify against the white killer, Mr. Gore escaped punishment. As Douglass puts it "and thus the guilty perpetrator of one of the bloodiest and most foul murders goes unwhipped of justice, and uncensored by the community in which he lives" (36). Therefore, as Douglass points out, incidents of killing slaves whose perpetrators escape any sort of punishment or even any kind of condemnation by the community occur very frequently in the South. Douglass states that "It was a common saying, even among little white boys, that it was worth a half-cent to kill a "nigger," and a half-cent to bury one" (37).

Another example of marginalization related by Douglass is when he tried to seek wage work while a slave. Douglass describes being hired out by his master, Hugh Auld as a situation that "was decidedly in my master favor...He received all the benefits of slaveholding without its evils; while I endured all the evils of a slave, and suffered all the care and anxiety of a freeman" (103). Douglass has to do any kind of work and suffer hardship, racism, and prejudice of white people to earn money.

However, being a slave he did not have the right to keep his own wage and most of his wage was given to his master. Douglass highlights the fact that while he was seemingly given the freedom of hiring his time, he received no "benefits" of being free. Instead, he only felt the negative emotions associated with freedom, those of "care and anxiety".

In a related context, Douglass recounts incidents of racism and prejudice that he suffered when he was hired to work in Mr. Gardener's shipyard. When he worked as a ship carpenter, he suffered from harassment and abuse by white carpenters who considered the job for white only. Resenting the competition of a leased slave, they started provoking him. Douglass relates: "They began to put on airs and talk about the "niggers" taking the country, saying we all ought to be killed..." (96). Intending to highlight the racist and unjust treatment of white people, Douglass describes his fight with the white carpenters that took place in the shipyard in detail. He is beaten severely by a group of white carpenters just because he is black. Though the fight took place in front of many other white carpenters, no one interfered to stop the fight. Instead, as Douglass relates, they cried "Kill the damned nigger! Kill him! Kill him! He struck a white person" (97). Douglass comments:

I found my only chance for life was in flight. I succeeded in getting away without an additional blow, and barely so; for to strike a white man is death by Lynch law, ... and that was the law in Mr. Gardner's ship-yard; nor is there much of any other out of Mr. Gardner's ship-yard. (97)

Douglass relates that though his master sympathized with him and tried to defend him, he was unable to bring to justice those brutal carpenters. Any testimony of the blacks was not accepted and at the same time, no white man would testify against his fellow.

Douglass suffered from the same difficulty and sense of marginalization even after he escaped slavery and reached New Bedford. Douglass did not find himself, even in New Bedford, quite beyond the influence of slavery. Prejudice and racism prevented him from finding work in his trade of calker which seemed to be restricted to whites only. "I went in pursuit of a job of calking;" Douglass states, "but such was the strength of prejudice against color, among the white calkers, that they refused to work with me, and of course I could get no employment" (113). Therefore, he sought employment as a laborer which he found easily.

To conclude, through his book, Douglass aimed to challenge the marginalization of African Americans and to expose the injustice and cruelty of slavery to a broader audience. His book tries to humanize and empower those who were marginalized by the oppressive system of slavery, calling for social and political change.

Othering and stereotyping are other obstacles that Douglass has to overcome in his journey towards freedom and humanization. However, in his book, Douglass deals with the theme of othering and stereotyping differently. Not only does he counter these stereotypes, but he also attaches them to slaveholders. The following part discusses this point in detail.

Othering and Stereotyping

According to Edward Said, theses of "Oriental backwardness, degeneracy and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the 19th century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality" (1978: 206) in the work of thinkers like Cuvier, Goboneau (Essay on the Inequality of Races) and Robert Knox (The Dark Races of Man). Such ideas were connected with "second-order Darwinism which seemed to accentuate the 'Scientific' validity

of the division of races into advanced and backward or European-Aryan and Oriental-African” (206). The Oriental was also attached to other “elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien” (207). Zuberi emphasizes the same idea when he argues that “the social sciences developed at a time when there was a need for scientific justification of racial stratification” (1579).

Othering and stereotyping are important post-colonial concepts that are powerfully countered and refuted whether through post-colonial discourse or African-American autobiography. According to colonialist discourse, the colonizers are superior embodying the 'proper' self while natives or Africans are inferior and embody the different or the 'other' (Tyson 419-420). Zuberi expresses the same idea when he argues that “the social sciences produce knowledge about “others” as “deviants” from the “norm” which is defined as white...” (1576). Thus according to Tyson, othering and stereotyping refer to the "practice of judging all who are different as less than fully human"(420). Homi Bhabha views the dehumanizing colonial stereotypes as a reflection of the colonizer`s unstable identity. He argues that the practice of the repetition of such stereotypes indicates that they already are not fixed. They need to be repeated continually to construct such dehumanizing images of Africans and thus construct such ' other' (22).

In his book, Douglass deals with the conceptions of othering and stereotyping in a different way. Not only does he refute and counter these stereotypes, but also ascribes them indirectly to slaveholders. Thus one of the major themes of Douglass's book is to show "one's educational attainment" (Tricomi 620), which counters the racist stereotype of slaves or Africans as being ignorant and having no intellect or a very low

status. At the same time, Douglass depicts the savage and barbarity of slaveholders and "consistently shows slaveholders to be devious and dishonest" (Matlack 19). He also shows how slaveholders make use of religion to justify their cruelty and inhuman treatment of their slaves. He represents slaveholders as misleaders who manipulate their slaves for their own purposes.

The first stereotype countered by Douglass is related to slaves' ignorance and their inability to learn. Literacy and the ability to read and write were not available to slaves. Instead, slaves are kept away from any means of education and slaveholders try everything to stop their slaves from educating themselves. Few who could defy and resist their master's will and manage to educate themselves. Douglass is one of those lucky few who succeeds in his process of self-education contrary to his master's will. Douglass is sent to Baltimore to serve Mr. and Mrs. Auld and take care of their son Tommy. On hearing his new mistress reading vocally from the Bible, Douglass asks her to teach him. To his surprise, she agrees without hesitation. Soon Douglass knows the alphabet and can spell words. However, Mrs. Auld is prevented at once by her husband from giving Douglass further lessons because learning, as Mr. Auld puts it, would make him out of control.

For Douglass, Mr. Auld's response was a new revelation as at that moment he understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. Douglass was eager to learn and nothing would stand in his way. Everything now contributes to his enlightenment and his process of self-education. His occasional contact with free colored people, his visit to the wharves where he can watch the vessels going and coming, and his contact with white boys on the street, all became part of his self-education. He carried in his pocket a blue-backed Webster's Spelling Book. And as occasion offered, he induced his young white playmates to give him lessons in spelling. He carried bread with him for such a

purpose: "This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge" (Douglass 49).

Douglass bought a school book called The "Colombian Orator", from which he chose speeches to read them over and over until he fully understood them. He knew about the term "abolition" by a chance look at a Baltimore newspaper. And soon he could comprehend the meaning of the term and how it was important to him in his search for freedom. Douglass learned to write by copying letters on fences and walls and challenging his white playmates to find his mistakes. When he was in the shipyard, Douglass noticed that the carpenters marked pieces of timber with certain letters to indicate their positions in the vessel. By asking questions, he learned the names of these letters. He started copying letters upon the ground, on fences and walls, copying the italics in his spelling book. At night, when no one watched him, he copied from an old copy-book of his young master Tommy filling up all the blank spaces. Thus by the age of thirteen, Douglass succeeded in learning to read and write. He also learned the important trick of writing "free passes" for runaway slaves.

Depending only on his own will and his own efforts, Douglass succeeded in educating himself though he did not have sufficient means to achieve such a goal. He also encouraged his fellow slaves to read and learn. To achieve such a purpose he made a Sabbath school at the house of a free colored man and devoted his Sundays to teach his fellow slaves how to read (Douglass 85). Thus one can say that Douglass's success in educating himself as well as his fellow slaves proves that they are capable of learning. Furthermore, it refutes and counters the white assumption and stereotype of slaves and Africans in general as having no intellect or ability to learn.

Savage and barbarity is another stereotype refuted and countered by Douglass in his book. White racism stereotypes all Africans or "Negros" as savage and barbaric or uncivilized who cannot exist in a civilized society. However, Douglass in his book depicts through several examples the savage and barbarity of white overseers and slave-holders which is manifested in their inhumane treatment of their own slaves.

Mr. Gore is a perfect example of such a cruel, savage, and brute overseer. Speaking of him, Douglass states that " he was one of those who could torture the slightest look, word, or gesture, on the part of the slave, into impudence, and would treat it accordingly" (33). Punishment and whipping are his first and only means in his treatment of the slave no matter how innocent he may be. According to him," It is better that a dozen slaves should suffer under the lash than the overseer should be convicted, in the presence of the slaves, of having been at fault" (Douglass 34). One of the most savage deeds he committed was his killing of one of the slaves under his charge who tried to escape whipping. The slave ran away and jumped into a creek. Mr. Gore warned him that he would shoot him if he did not come out. After three calls from Mr. Gore that did not find a response, he fired him without any hesitation. Mr. Gore's savage barbarity was manifested in the perfect coolness with which he committed such a vicious crime.

Mr. Severe is another example of a cruel and savage overseer who seems to find pleasure in whipping and torturing his own slaves. Douglass relates the incident of Mr. Severe's brutal whipping of a woman causing her to bleed in front of her crying children. Douglass comments: "He seemed to take pleasure in manifesting his fiendish barbarity" (24). Douglass mentions also that it is the habit of Mr. Severe to stand by the door holding a large hickory stick and a heavy lash. He can whip any of the slaves who is not ready, at the sound of the

horn, for his day's work in the field. In addition to his cruelty and his vicious treatment of his slaves, Mr. Severe was a "profane swearer". He never stopped cursing, raving, and slashing among the slaves in the field. Douglass states that "the field was the place to witness his cruelty and profanity. His presence made it both the field of blood and blasphemy" (24).

Another example of the barbarity of slaveholders is shown in their treatment of Douglass's grandmother in her old age. She serves Mr. Antony faithfully from young age to old age. She contributed to his richness and his great wealth by providing him with a great number of slaves to work on his plantation. She outlived his old master and all his children. However, as Douglass bitterly relates, she was left a slave forever. As a mere property, she was inherited by a new slaveholder. Her long faithful service was met by a "base ingratitude" and "fiendish barbarity" (57). Being of a very old age and thus becoming useless to her slaveholders, she was kept in a hut to live alone and face her own destiny in complete loneliness. Douglass states: "They took her to the woods, built her a little hut, put up a little mud-chimney, and then made her welcome to the privilege of supporting herself there in perfect loneliness; thus virtually turning her out to die!" (57).

Countering racial stereotypes, Douglass also attacks the hypocrisy of religious masters and their use of religion to justify their cruelty and their dehumanizing treatment of slaves. Douglass views that being a slave of a religious master is a great distress for any slave: "For of all the slave-holders with whom I have ever met, religious slaveholders are the worst. I have ever found them the meanest and basest, the most cruel and cowardly, of all others" (82). Douglass attacked the corruption of the religion of the South by giving several examples of religious slave-holders who used religion as a cover for all their misdeeds. Through his experience with slave-

holders in general and with religious ones in specific, Douglass concludes that:

The 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. (82)

Douglass relates several examples of religious masters who are mean, brute, and merciless despite their religion. Mr. Thomas Auld is one of those masters from whom Douglass and his other fellows suffered greatly. Douglass relates his miserable experience under the management of Mr. Thomas who, because of his ultimate meanness, did not provide his slaves with enough food. According to Douglass, "not to give a slave enough to eat, is regarded as the most aggravated development of meanness even among slaveholders" (61). Douglass relates that it was the first time since he left Col. Lloyd's plantation that he felt "the painful gnawing of hunger" (60). Accordingly, Douglass and his fellow slaves were obliged to beg and steal whatever they could get from their neighbors. Douglass expresses his bitter experience with hunger and criticizes his own master and his wife sarcastically:

A great many times have we poor creatures been nearly perishing with hunger, when food in abundance lay mouldering in the safe and smoke-house, and our pious mistress was aware of the fact; and yet that mistress and her husband would kneel every morning, and pray that God would bless them in basket and store!. (61)

Mr. Auld's inhumane treatment of his slaves is also manifested in his harsh punishment of his slaves. Douglass points out that even Mr. Auld's conversion did not make any

positive change in his character and he became much worse than before. He used the Bible to condone his behavior and “found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty” (63). He quoted from Scripture ("He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes") to justify his savage barbarity when he tied up a young lame woman and whipped her until blood dripped off her naked shoulders. Furthermore, he would keep her tied in such a miserable condition, leave her for hours, and return to whip her again (64).

Rev. Rigby Hopkins, a member and a minister in the Reformed Methodist Church, is another example of the wretched, cruel, and merciless religious slave-holder. His strategy in managing his slaves depends first and last on the lash. That is to say; “whipping slaves in advance of deserving it” (Douglass 82). He assigns a specific day every week for whipping one or more of his slaves to strike fear and terror into the other slaves. He can always find a justification for such a deed: " A mere look, word, or motion,--a mistake, accident, or want of power,--are all matters for which a slave may be whipped at any time" (83). Douglass emphasizes Rev. Hopkins's cruelty and dehumanizing treatment of his slaves that no slave would ever like to live with him. At the same time, he stresses his state as a prominent religious figure that “there was not a man anywhere round, who made higher professions of religion or was more active in revivals,--more attentive to the class, love-feast prayer and preaching meetings . . .--than this same reverend slave-driver, Rigby Hopkins” (83). Here Douglass emphasizes Rev. Hopkins’s absolute religious hypocrisy who was at once the most effective religious figure and the most hated by all the slaves.

Mr. Covey is an extreme example of the hypocrisy of a religious slave driver. He is " a professor of religion—a pious

soul, a member and a class leader in the Methodist church" (Douglass 65) and a most savage and cruel master. He also represents the extreme example of dishonesty and deceit for "everything he possessed in the shape of learning or religion, he made to conform to his disposition to deceive. He seems to think himself equal to deceiving the Almighty" (69). Douglass was sent to be disciplined or "broken" by Covey, the Negro breaker. Covey's strategy in disciplining and breaking slaves depends on hard toil from dawn to night and regular harsh punishment. Covey watches over his slaves and uses his power of deception to catch the slaves who neglect their duties of continuous toil. Thus he justifies consequent punishment. As Douglass recalls: "His comings was like a thief in the night. He appeared to us as being ever at hand. He was under every tree, behind every stump, in every bush, and at every window, on the plantation" (69).

Douglass stresses the cruel and dehumanizing treatment of Mr. Covey as well as his ultimate hypocrisy. He recalls how he is objected to several vicious beatings by Covey on the charge of his carelessness at work. Douglass states: "During the first six months, of that year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me. I was seldom free from a sore back. My awkwardness was almost always his excuse for whipping me"(68). Douglass tried to escape further beatings and ran towards St. Michael's to ask for protection from his Master. However, Mr. Thomas did not sympathize with him and ordered him to return to Covey the next day since he belonged to him for the rest of the year. When Douglass returned to Covey on Sunday, he was not flogged by Covey for it was the day of Sabbath and Mr. Covey was going to a meeting in the Church. The incident narrated by Douglass is meant to show the extreme hypocrisy of such a religious man who respects the day more than the human. However, on Monday everything seemed normal and Douglass was called to take care of the horses. But

it was just a trick and a deceit of Mr. Covey to get hold of Douglass in the stable and punish him for his running away.

Douglass reveals another kind of wickedness of Mr. Covey which contradicts his reputation as a pious and religious man and shows his hypocrisy. Douglass narrates that Mr. Covey was a poor man and could only afford to “buy one slave; and, shocking as is the fact, he bought her, as he said, for a breeder” (70). Mr. Covey hired a married man to make a relationship with her every night and the woman slave was thus forced to reproduce more slaves to Mr. Covey. At the end of the year, the woman gave birth to twins which were added to Covey's human stock. Douglass ridicules Mr. Covey's mischievous deeds as well as his extreme hypocrisy in the following manner:

Poor man! Such was his disposition, and success at deceiving, I do verily believe that he sometimes deceived himself into the solemn belief, that he was a sincere worshipper of the most high God; and this, too, at a time when he may be said to have been guilty of compelling his woman slave to commit the sin of adultery. (69)

To conclude, one can say that in Douglass's work, the theme of stereotyping is central to his depiction of the dehumanizing effects of slavery. Through his personal experiences and observations, Douglass confronts and dismantles prevailing stereotypes about African Americans, asserting their equal humanity and dignity. In the meantime, through his depiction of the meanness, hypocrisy, dishonesty, violence, cruelty, and inhumanity of the slaveholders, Douglass's work acts as a counter-discourse to the dominant ideological white discourse which attributes all virtues to the whites and all shortcomings to the blacks.

Identity conflict is one of the greatest difficulties that Douglass experienced as a slave. Power and oppression of the master, ignorance or lack of knowledge, marginalization, and stereotyping all contribute badly to such conflict. However, such a conflict became more intense when Douglass managed to learn to read and write. The next part discusses this point in detail.

Identity Conflict and the Search for Identity

I came into the world imbed with the will to find meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects. (Fanon 1967: 257)

The problem of identity conflict is very crucial whether in African-American studies or post-colonial studies. "Deprived of any sense of identity or any satisfying feeling of the self, [African American people] throughout the centuries have been engaged in attempts to define their existence" (Das 82-83). In his *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois was the first to refer to this problem through his famous concept of "double consciousness". In this book, he suggests that the white American society allows the black "no true self-consciousness but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (214-215). The outcome is:

a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one`s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one`s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, _ an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (9)

Fanon, as an Algerian and a Frenchman, deals with the problem of identity conflict more explicitly. In his works, Fanon demonstrates that colonized and oppressed people also experience this condition of double consciousness. He discusses the conflict between the identity imposed on him by others as a stereotyped black body and his real individual self. He writes:

Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has to place himself....[H]is customs and the sources on which they are based, are wiped out because they are in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him. (1967:110)

According to Marc Black, the concept of double consciousness connects both Fanon and Dubois very strongly. He argues that the fact that this condition of double consciousness is experienced by both colonized people and African Americans in the U.S. "relates racism in the U.S. to colonialism historically" (394). He explains that though Americans do not view themselves as practicing colonialism, "the common experience of double-consciousness among oppressed people illuminates the common position of whiteness, and white people, as that of oppressor both in the U.S. and abroad (393).

Identity conflict is considered the fifth obstacle that Douglass has to overcome in his journey towards freedom and humanization. In his book, Douglass typically experiences the problem of double consciousness. Born a slave, and leaving a great part of his life under a system of chattel slavery, he was seen by his masters or his oppressors as sub-human, property, or an object. As Sarah Way Sherman puts it "Douglass's narrative begins with a slave who does not know he is human" (169). Indeed, Douglass passed three stages of his life under slavery; as a child, as a boy, and as a young man. Each stage represents a

certain level of identity conflict when dealing with his masters or oppressors. How Douglass sees himself and how he is seen by others during these different stages is to be discussed in this section.

As a child and until the age of seven, Douglass felt and experienced few of the sufferings and privations of slavery. Due to his young age, he did not work as a field hand yet. Consequently, he was away from any direct contact with his slaveholder. However, the most torturing incident for him in this early stage which affects and reflects his identity conflict is his deprivation of his mother and his uncertainty about the identity of his father. He was separated from his slave mother when he was but twelve months old. His mother was forced to live and work on a plantation at a distance of twelve miles from Col. Lloyd`s plantation. However, Douglass`s mother came to see her child occasionally despite the great efforts and sacrifices required by this visit.

Douglass was raised his first seven years by his kind grandmother who seems to have a privileged character on the plantation. For she was permitted to live with her husband in a cabin of their own, charged with only light duties and saved from hard toil. Being under the care of an affectionate and tender grandmother he was given better care and more attention than the ordinary slave-child. Up to this time, Douglass had not yet realized his condition as a slave. He was still away from the cruel and miserable scenes of slavery. Staying with his grandmother who lived outside the plantation made Douglass “out of the way of the bloody scenes that often occurred on the plantation” (Douglass 20).

As a boy, Douglass passes two different phases. The first phase of his boyhood began when, at the age of seven, he was taken from the cabin of his grandmother at Tuckahoe to his master`s residence on Colonel Lloyd`s plantation. It is at this

stage of his life that Douglass begins to realize his wretched condition as a slave. He begins to notice how he and his fellow slaves are looked at with contempt and pity and how they are treated as property or sub-humans or sometimes like animals by their masters. Being ignorant, he and his fellow slaves find no inconsistency in being slaves. They think that they are fit only to be slaves. He spent four years of the slave life on Col. Lloyd`s plantation in which he became both an eye-witness and a victim of the evils of slavery. He now comes to see the harsh and dehumanizing treatment of slaves. He sees the field hand driven forth, like an animal, at dawn to labor until dark. He hears the unmerciful strokes of the lash on the backs of others. He sees the starved and frosted fellow slaves who do not find enough food or sufficient clothing.

Douglass gives a detailed account of the living conditions of the slaves on Col. Lloyd`s plantation. Through his detailed description of these conditions, Douglass emphasizes the dehumanized status of the slaves in a white-dominated society and how they are treated as sub-humans or property. Douglass carefully relates the kind and quality of the monthly allowance of food given to the slaves which is not sufficient compared to the hard work required from them. It consists of "eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish and one bushel of corn meal" (22). Douglass also stresses the kind and quality of the slave`s yearly clothing which is also insufficient for a whole year.

Douglass Continues describing the miserable living conditions of the slaves. He depicts the sleeping arrangements of the slaves as well as the general hardships of their day`s work. He states: "There were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these" (23). Douglass stresses that the slaves` great difficulty, however, is not due to the lack of beds but the lack of time to sleep. Douglass remembers how he suffered

from the lack of food, clothing, and bed. As he was not yet able to work in the field he was deprived of all such things. Douglass relates that his great suffering during his early childhood was as much from hunger as from cold:

I suffered much from hunger, but much more from cold. In the hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked—no shoes, no stockings, no jackets, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees. I had no bed.....My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pin with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes. (38-39)

Douglass emphasizes another kind of inhuman and humiliating treatment of the slaves when he gives several accounts of physical violence and abuse to which the slaves are regularly exposed. For him, this kind of treatment is meant to subjugate them morally and spiritually. Douglass himself did not experience that kind of physical abuse during his childhood. Douglass explains: " I was seldom whipped by my old master, and suffered little from anything else than hunger and cold"(38). However, he relates numerous eyewitness accounts of floggings, beatings, and whippings of the slaves carried out by masters and overseers alike. Such whippings do not differentiate between men or women, young or old.

Douglass relates in his text several detailed incidents of beatings and whippings of slaves. However, one of the most striking scenes of slave beating in Douglass's text is the scene of the brutal whipping of a female slave, Hester by their common master, Captain Antony. Douglass, who, at the time, was hiding in a closet in the kitchen where the incident took place, "was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight" (20). He states: "It was all new to me. I had never seen anything like it before"(20). Indeed, the incident acts as a good example of the dehumanizing effect of slavery on both slave and master.

Douglass's comment on Captain Antony's harsh attitude towards the female slave implies that his actions are caused by the evils of slavery and nothing else: "Had he been a man of pure morals himself, he might have been thought interested in protecting the innocence of my aunt, but those who knew him will not suspect him of any such virtue" (20) For Douglass, the brutal whipping used by masters as a punishment and which is deliberate and systematic is intended to fully subjugate the slaves. It is meant to oppress the slaves both physically and mentally and to decline their humanity.

The second phase of Douglass's boyhood began when he was sent to Baltimore. It was the most important event in his life for he moved from the plantation cabin to the city home. It is in this stage that Douglass started to view himself differently after he managed to overcome his ignorance, break the chains of his mind, and learn to read and write. At the age of eight, Douglass was sent to live in the household of Mr. and Mrs. Auld to run errands and take care of their son. He was well fed, well treated, at the beginning, by his kind mistress Mrs. Auld. Young Douglass up to that time was ignorant and knew nothing about reading or writing. On hearing his new mistress reading aloud from the Bible, his curiosity was aroused. His mistress's kindness encouraged him to ask her to teach him. He quickly learned the alphabet and in a short time could spell words of three syllables. However, when Mr. Auld discovered his wife's deed, he at once stopped her telling her that "a nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do" (Douglass 44).

However, it has been too late for the seed has already been sown. The mere fact that Douglass's master prevented his learning made him more eager to acquire knowledge by whatever means. For Douglass, as he puts it in his book *My Bondage and My Freedom*, his master's words were "the first

decidedly anti-slavery lecture to which it had been [his] lot to listen” (141). Douglass's mistress has given him a start and his own efforts gained the rest. He carried in his pocket a Webster's Spelling Book, and occasionally he induced his young white playmates to give him lessons in spelling. One of the important books that seems to have a marked influence on his life during this stage is *The Colombian Orator*. He obtained, somehow, a copy of the book which contains selected masterpieces of English oratory in which liberty is praised and oppression is condemned. The book gave Douglass a larger idea of liberty and the rights of man and in addition, it increased his vocabulary of words and phrases. Douglass's eagerness for freedom becomes more intense and more problematic at the same time. For Douglass “the silver trump of freedom has roused [his] soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever, it was heard in every sound, and seen in everything” (Douglass 51).

From that time on, Douglass never missed an opportunity to acquire the knowledge that would prepare him for freedom and give him the means of escape from slavery. Douglass now believes that the ability to read and write is his first and only means for his self-assertion and his freedom. As Das puts it “the desire to be able to read and use language to articulate grievances has been and still a significant feature in the African-American quest for identity” (85). Douglass first learned that there were such people called abolitionists, who were opposed to human bondage and sought to make all men free. He became all ears whenever the word was mentioned before him. He “always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to [him] self and fellow slaves” (Douglass 52). Everything now contributes to his enlightenment and prepares him for the freedom for which he thirsts. His occasional contact with free colored people, his visits to the wharves watching the vessels going and coming, and his

acquaintance with white boys on the street, all become a part of his educational process and are made to serve his plans.

Douglass began to view himself as a full human capable of learning and thinking and of equal rights to his white fellows and not as a mere chattel. His learning to read was out of childish curiosity as well as the desire to be able to do what others around him do. He started thinking of and reconsidering his condition as a slave, detesting and rejecting it. He reconsidered the relationship between masters and slaves wondering why there should be masters and slaves. He hated his enslavers regarding them "in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen [them] from [their] homes, and in a strange land reduced [them] to slavery" (Douglass 50). Douglass began to test and measure the actions of his master and those around him by the principles of universal rights and justice after reading the Colombian Orator. He began to talk with white little boys about the matter of slavery saying: "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life!* Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" (Douglass 49).

Douglass is now determined to change his condition; to escape slavery and free himself. However, to escape from bondage and go beyond the limits of his neighborhood he will certainly need written permission from his master. Thus he decided to learn writing to write his own pass. He learned to write by copying letters on fences and walls and challenging his white playmates to find his mistakes. He noticed, while being in the shipyard, that the carpenters marked pieces of timber with certain letters to indicate their position in the vessels. By asking the workmen questions about the letters he learned the names of these letters and their significance. In secrecy, he filled up all the blank spaces of his young master's old copybooks. In time Douglass learned to write and before formulating any plans for

freeing himself, he learned the important trick of writing" free passes" for runaway slaves.

As a young man, Douglass became more conscious and more defiant than before in his relation to his master. He became bold and rebellious to such an extent that he soon turned into a fit subject to be "broken in" by a notorious "negro breaker". So far Douglass managed to avoid severe physical punishment during his early childhood and early teenage years, except for the occasional whipping from his master. It was in this stage of his life that Douglass's sufferings became more intense both physically and spiritually. Douglass was hired out by his master to a notorious "negro breaker", Edward Covey. He became a field hand for the first time in his life. Mr. Covey's treatment of Douglass was very harsh and cruel. As Douglass puts it: "I lived with Mr. Covey one year. During the first six months, of that year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me (Douglass 68).

Douglass points out that Covey's strategy for Negro breaking consists of regular beating and hard and inhuman labor. During the first six weeks, he was with Covey, Douglass was whipped, either with sticks or cowhides, every week. Covey's first flogging issued to Douglass occurred in the woods, where Douglass was ordered to remove his clothes to be whipped more efficiently. He was kept at work in fields or woods from the dawn of day until the darkness of night. Speaking of his great suffering and his psychological pain under the management of Mr. Covey, Douglass states: "I was somewhat unmanageable when I first went there, but a few months of this discipline tamed me. Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me" (70).

Douglass's suffering of body and soul became so great that he could not endure it anymore. While in this condition, Douglass resorted to his master Thomas Auld expecting a kind

of sympathy and a promise of protection. However, he was grievously disappointed. His master did not even listen to his complaints and immediately sent him back to his vicious and cruel master to face the additional penalty of running away. Being in such a wretched condition, Douglass made the desperate resolution to resist any further punishment at Covey's hands. He was ready to submit to any kind of work, however hard or unreasonable, but determined to defend himself against any attempt at another flogging. Asserting his recently discovered identity, Douglass says: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man" (72). Thus when the occasion came and Covey attempted to whip him, Douglass resolved to fight and did fight. After a fight of two hours, Covey gave up his attempt to whip him. Douglass came out of the fight as the winner, and Mr. Covey never laid his hands on him again.

As Douglass points out, the battle with Mr. Covey was a turning point in his life. It was an important development in his pathway from slavery to freedom. As Kohn puts it, the battle symbolized a psychological liberation for Douglass and ensured his sense of manhood (500). It helped to increase his self-respect as well as his self-confidence. Douglass recovers his sense of his manhood as well as his sense of his humanity. His self-esteem and his awareness of being a full human who has the right to be free becomes greater. Douglass expresses his feelings after such confrontation as follows:

It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. (Douglass 78)

Thus, one can say that through this battle and this confrontation with Covey, Douglass succeeded in freeing himself psychologically from slavery. And it was just a matter of time to achieve his final aim and free himself physically. He became aware of his full potential as an individual believing that an open rebellion against slavery would provide him the way to freedom and the key to the liberation of his fellow slaves.

To conclude, in his journey from slavery to freedom and from dehumanization to humanization Douglass has to undergo many obstacles. Power and oppression, ignorance, marginalization, stereotyping, and identity conflict are considered the main difficulties that he has to face as a slave. However, Douglass managed to overcome these obstacles and liberate himself spiritually and psychologically through a process of self-education as well as an act of resistance. It was a matter of time before he succeeded in liberating himself physically and attaining his full freedom and humanization.

Throughout the study, the researcher tried to highlight the powerful relationship between knowledge and freedom. Drawing from post-colonial theories and post-colonial concepts, the research emphasizes how the author employs his autobiographical novel as a powerful tool to challenge dominant dehumanizing ideologies and refute and overcome them through knowledge and self-education. At the same time, his novel functions as a counter-discourse to the dominant and prevailing colonial discourse through relating so many examples of white oppression, violence, dishonesty, and hypocrisy and through relating his experience of struggle and resistance which ends finally with humanization and freedom.

Finally, this study is just a way of understanding African American Autobiography, highlighting themes inherent in this literary genre. However the field of African American

autobiography is vast, offering numerous other aspects and perspectives that deserve deeper exploration. Future studies could expand on the historical context, cultural influences, narrative techniques in the work of Douglass and other African American writers, exploring how they reflect the socio-political context of their time and influence contemporary literature.

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة المرحلة الأولى في رحلة فردريك دوجلاس نحو تحقيق الحرية والإنسانيه المبتغاه وتركز الدراسة على فترة طفولة دوجلاس وشبابه المبكر وتجربته الشخصية مع العبودية وكذلك تعليمه الذاتي، وهو كعبد سابق لا يصف تجربته مع العبودية فحسب بل يكشف ويصف الآليات الداخلية لنظام العبودية وكيف أن هذا النظام يجرّد كل من العبد والسيد من إنسانيته، إضافة إلى ذلك يصف دوجلاس الإستراتيجية التي اعتمدها لتحقيق حريته وبناء على ذلك فقد كرس دوجلاس حياته خلال مسيرته فيما بعد ككاتب وخطيب وسياسي للدعوة إلى إلغاء العبودية، وتقوم الدراسة بتحليل رواية دوجلاس وفقا لمفاهيم نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار مثل مفهوم السلطة ومفهوم التجهيل و غياب المعرفة ومفهوم التهميش ومفهوم القولبة او الصور النمطية و أخيرا مفهوم صراع الهوية كعوامل سلبية تمثل إفتقار الكاتب للحرية والإنسانية والتي يجب التغلب عليها من قبل الكاتب في رحلته نحو الحرية والإنسانية، وتبين الدراسة أيضا كيف أن موضوع الجهل وغياب المعرفة كما ينعكس في رواية دوجلاس يؤكد على القوة التدميرية لحرمان فئة من الناس من التعليم، وتظهر الدراسة ان رحلة دوجلاس من العبودية إلى الحرية مرت بالعديد من العقبات ومع ذلك تمكن دوجلاس من التغلب على هذه العقبات وتحرير نفسه نفسيا وجسديا عن طريق التعليم الذاتي والمقاومة ورفض العبودية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : العبودية، التجريد من الإنسانية ، السلطة، التجهيل، التهميش، القولبة، صراع الهوية ، المقاومة.