

Revising Escape

Frederick Douglass's Civic Promise of
Free Trade and Amitav Ghosh's Global
Geography of Commercial Imperialism

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Civilization is all love and tenderness toward whatever accords and co-operates with it, but implacable, cruel, and remorseless to all obstacles. It spares neither forest, mountain, nor ocean, and it will not spare Indian, Mongolian, or Ethiopian. All must go along with it, or be crushed beneath its swift-flying wheels.¹

—Frederick Douglass, “The Condition of the Freedman” (1883)

The 1882 London edition of *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Figure 2.1) was exhibited at University of Hong Kong Museum and Art Gallery as part of “Rising Above: the Kinsey African American Art and History Collection.”² The book is the third title of Douglass’s three autobiographies, including *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855).³ Given his expansive career as an author, lecturer, newspaper editor, civil rights activist, and diplomat, it is particularly insightful to consider how and why he revised his autobiographical accounts over the decades on the international stage. Occasioned by the Kinsey Exhibit’s debut in East Asia, the following

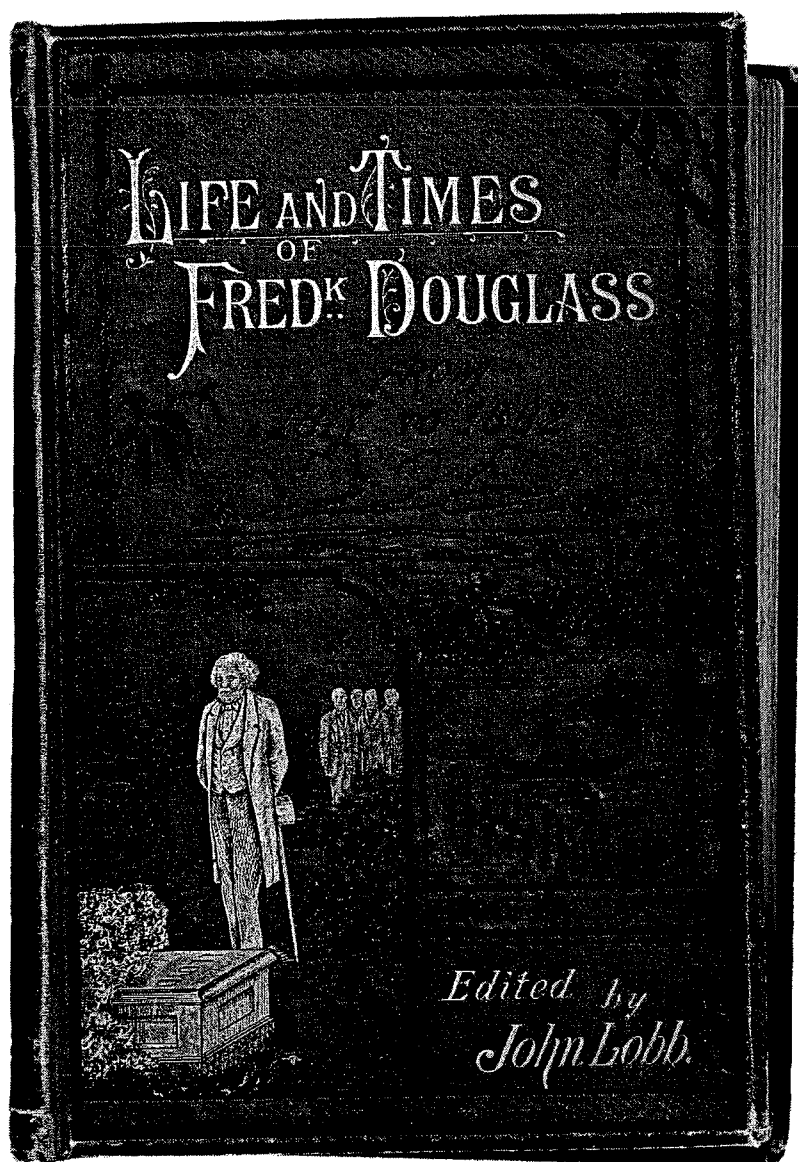


Figure 2.1 Frederick Douglass. *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass from 1817–1832*, 1882. Book, 8 ½ x 6 ½ x 1 ¾ in. Courtesy of the Kinsey African American Art and History Collection and the Bernard & Shirley Kinsey Foundation for the Arts & Education.

essay considers the geographical reach of *free trade* ideals that permeate Douglass's writings, particularly in his representations of escaping slavery, of building transatlantic alliances with laborers in the United Kingdom and Ireland, and of defending the civil right to work in the era of Reconstruction and Chinese Exclusion.

Expanding the geographical reach of Douglass's writings to Asia sheds light on the recent allusions that novelist Amitav Ghosh makes to him in the *Ibis Trilogy*: *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015). The novels connect the dockyard of Baltimore to Bengal and South China in routes of opium and human trafficking before the First Opium War (1839–1842). Ghosh thus widens the national and transatlantic context in which readers usually encounter Douglass's autobiographies to include sea routes through South, Southeast, and East Asia where free trade rhetoric supported very different designs.⁴ In the transatlantic contexts of Douglass's autobiographies, free trade affirmed the rights of laborers and sailors across lines of race and nation. However, in the trans-hemispheric setting of Ghosh's narrative, free trade supported opium smuggling and justified resulting war as civilizing consequences of British and American commercial ambition.

In critiquing free trade as a rhetoric that worked to very different purposes in different parts of the world, Ghosh echoes motifs of trade that pervade Douglass's autobiographies, including a key scene related to a secret that Douglass pointedly withheld from the first two autobiographies and only revealed in *Life and Times*: how he escaped. In the first autobiography of 1845 Douglass associates hope of escape with freedom of movement on the ships visiting the plantations and with the knowledge that he gains working on the dockyards of Baltimore. He then refuses to explain *how* he escaped to readers who have purchased his book and whose curiosity he acknowledges. In the second autobiography of 1855 he again frustrates his readers' curiosity as he adapts Adam Smith's metaphor of the invisible hand to threaten an impending abolitionist violence of which slaveholders are mortally ignorant.

After the Civil War and the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, Douglass was in a position to satisfy his readers' curiosity without spoiling the strategy for others who were enslaved. He first revealed the details in a March 1873 lecture and then incorporated the incident into the extended life account of *Life and Times*.⁵ The global context of free trade's liberating promise registers in the textual key to his escape: a federal document known as a Seaman's Protection Certificate. In September 1838 while working on the docks of the southern port city of Baltimore, Douglass borrowed a certificate from a black freeman. Douglass then dressed up as a sailor to match the description on the certificate and boarded a train bound for the free northern city of Philadelphia from the slave state of Maryland. He coolly negotiated the scrutiny of the train conductor, trusting him to credit the federal jurisdiction of the certificate. In the guise of a free American seaman Douglass thus negotiated regional prejudices related to race, enabling his transit out of a Southern mid-Atlantic slave state. In the broader context of his life as a fugitive, this "seafaring subterfuge" is more than a sensational anecdote that fills in the factual gaps of earlier life accounts.⁶ His faith in the liberating effects of free trade resonates in his alliances with British leaders such as Robert Cobden and John Bowring, who embraced the individual's "freedom of contract" in the international market for labor.⁷

In Ghosh's dramatization of free trade double-speak, Douglass is particularly relevant as a point of reference for a central character. Zachary Reid is a young, handsome, Black American man, who, unlike Douglass, is free. At the beginning of Ghosh's *Trilogy*, the light-complexioned Reid stands with a group of other free Black men who helplessly witness "Freddy Douglass" being beaten by white dockworkers in Baltimore. Reid recalls that "Douglass" did not reproach him afterward for not intervening. Instead, he urged him to scatter with the others throughout the ports of the world, telling them: "It's about jobs; the whites won't work with you, freeman or slave: keeping you out is their way of saving bread."⁸ Reid flees by signing a contract to serve as a

carpenter on the *Ibis*, a former slave ship that the novel's villainous British merchant repurposes for coolie transport and opium smuggling. In the course of Reid's subsequent picaresque sea adventure, Ghosh seems to borrow and adapt Douglass's strategy of playing the free mariner as the novels' character Reid adopts various disguises that enable him to slip the racial yoke of a ship manifest designating him as "Black." After a spectacular rise and fall in fortunes, Reid finally rises into a nefarious partnership; at the end of the third novel, *Flood of Fire*, he sits with the villainous British merchant and a murderously double-dealing Chinese smuggler at the mouth of the Pearl River, posed to make a fortune. In effect Zachary Reid flips Douglass's coin of free trade idealism to reveal a reverse of imperialist trade practices in India and China.⁹

Ghosh lampoons the hypocrisy of free trade cant, but Douglass is very different from the novel's Zachary Reid and the "Freddy Douglass" whose advice Reid remembers. As Douglass's autobiographies document, and this essay explains, Douglass neither disappeared into perpetual disguise on the seas of perceived free trade opportunism nor succumbed to exploitive opportunities in China and India. Instead he stayed in the United States, where he adamantly decried the racism against Chinese workers in the era of Chinese exclusion and advocated on behalf those who had immigrated to the U.S. under false pretenses of "coolie labor" agreements. As Reconstruction ended and the terror of Jim Crow took hold, Douglass embraced Chinese immigrants as fellow citizens and protested Chinese exclusion, celebrating the United States as a "composite nationality."¹⁰

Frederick Douglass Represents the Lives of "Frederick Douglass"

At the age of twenty-seven Douglass published *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. Today we read it as an autobiography and appreciate Douglass's literary mastery.¹¹ However, in 1845 it was a best-selling *slave narrative* that evinced his

suffering as “an American Slave,” a phrase reminding today’s readers that the practice of slavery and the political compromises protecting it shaped early national senses of cultural distinctiveness.¹² In 1807 Great Britain’s Slave Trade Act had abolished the slave trade throughout its empire and in 1833 the Slavery Abolition Act ended slavery itself. In the cause of American abolitionism the genre of the slave narrative was supposed to elicit the reader’s pity by reporting the gory facts of physical abuse and moral degradation that the writer had experienced. The limiting premise of such a task is summed up in the title’s odd phrase “Written by Himself,” which emphasizes the literal terms of Douglass placing pen to paper in order to record the facts of his tortured and pathetic experience. (Figure 2.2)

In the convention of slave narration, the first concern was to affirm the trustworthiness of the narrating slave. Two prefaces to *Narrative* authenticate Douglass as an actual fugitive slave and vouch for the accuracy with which he reports what happened to him. The first preface is by the famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who took a passionate stand against slavery in his newspaper *The Liberator*, condemning the U.S. Constitution for accommodating the institution and exhorting resistance to the laws enabling slavery. In appreciating Douglass’s account, Garrison condones as “proper” his decision not to employ an editor who would have dressed up the facts that Douglass narrates to the “best of his ability.”¹³ Garrison thus implies that Douglass’s writing was rough and underdeveloped, casting the narrative’s style as a pathetic intellectual scar resulting from slavery’s deprivations. On the contrary, Douglass writes masterfully in *Narrative*, as he ostensibly adheres to the restrictive conventions of slave narration before flouting them to take command as an author over the representation of his slave experience and his production of the text reporting on it.

Douglass’s sophisticated reworking of slave narration begins on the first page. He opens space for critical reflection in calling attention first to his ignorance of a basic fact that one expects a citizen of the United States to know about herself or himself and, second, to the significance

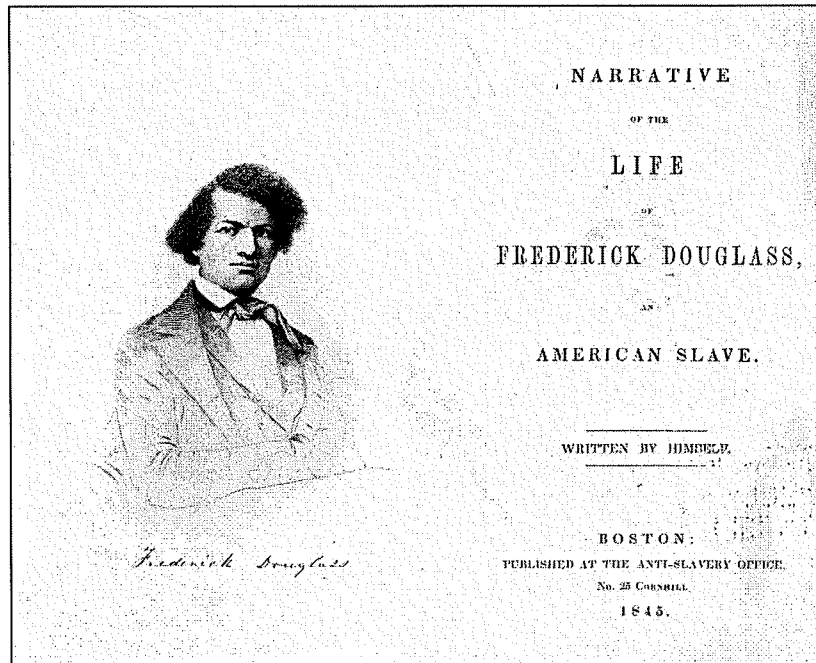


Figure 2.2 Frontispiece to *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* (Boston: Published at the Anti-Slavery Office, 1846). Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

of such ignorance for those who rule the plantation. He recalls that, as an enslaved child, he did not know his birthday and could only place it in a cycle of seasons that related to tasks performed on the plantation system. He also recalls wondering as a boy *why* he did not know his birthday, when the white children knew theirs. His reflection on this *lack* of knowledge broadens into a critique of white patriarchal mastery in, as Douglass terms it in later autobiographies, the “baronial domain” of the southern plantation.¹⁴

Douglass’s uncertainty over his birthday folds into uncertainty over his father’s name as he digs deeply and critically into the logic by which plantation masters attempted to control the enslaved person’s sense of identity. Bereft of dates and names, Douglass turns to complexion, describing his mother as “colored” and “quite dark” and reporting

that his father was a white man and (it was whispered) his master.¹⁵ His own complexion thus becomes an evocative sign of ambiguous paternal association and lost maternal connection. On the plantation, masters enslaved people as property and extended ownership to the children of women whom they purported to possess. In a devastatingly concise formulation, Douglass remarks that such laws made “gratification of wicked desires profitable as well as pleasurable.”¹⁶ To the extent that complexion and facial features of an enslaved person suggested the literal paternity of a white master or overseer, these features evinced an enduring reminder of an enslaved person’s literal procreative utility for the master. Phenotypic resemblance risked offending members of the master’s legal family, including his white wife and white children.¹⁷ Thus, an enslaved person’s appearance often affected their placement on the plantation, or whether they would be sold off to another estate and thereby removed from the sight of the white plantation family. With the riddle of his paternity so profoundly loaded with disrespect, Douglass eschewed naming the owner of the plantation on which he was born as he begins the *Narrative*. Its first sentence designates his birthplace through the administrative language of federal mapping: “I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland.”¹⁸

In the first two paragraphs Douglass depicts himself as a young boy apprehending the falsity of his slave condition and developing a furtive self-consciousness in realizing that his slaveholders were withholding from him basic knowledge such as his birthdate and family name. The first task of liberating a sense of self would be to address the deprivation of these facts while surviving a punitive system overseen by white men who believed that the “whip is all in all.”¹⁹ The first chapter concludes with an especially traumatic incident highlighting the visceral force at the master’s disposal and the master’s frustration behind its repeated use. Douglass presents himself cowering in his sleeping closet as he watches the master brutally whip his Aunt Hester for disobeying his order *not* to visit a free black man of whom she was fond. Douglass notes the limited

capacity of mere words to relate the master's cruelty and his aunt's suffering. He recalls that in watching the event, he felt himself to be both a witness and participant as he confides to the reader his boyhood fear of being the next to have his back bared and scored by the master's whip in this "bloody transaction."²⁰ In the threatening shadow of this visceral punishment, Douglass narrates his involuntary movements to and from the plantation as an enslaved boy who is developing an overarching quest for freedom – a quest realized through literacy that emboldens a refusal to be whipped. This self-conviction would drive him to risk the grimly torturous and potentially mortal consequences of repeated attempts to escape. As we will see, subsequent figures of sea travel in his narratives reinforce an ideal hope of escape in the movements of trade – a hope that permeates his account of an awakening consciousness.

In regard to the literal terms of slavery's "bloody transaction," he narrates an awakening quest for freedom as he claims authorial control over the figurative terms by which he communicates and sells the account of his life to readers. After spending an early boyhood in the care of his grandmother on the periphery of the plantation system, Douglass reaches an age when he is brought to the home of Colonel Edward Lloyd, where Douglass's legal master Captain Thomas Anthony lived with his wife, the daughter of Col. Lloyd. It is here that he witnessed the punishment of his aunt. During his two years on the plantation he suffered from cold and hunger but avoided being whipped severely as he helped Col. Lloyd's son Daniel hunt birds and ran errands for Capt. Anthony's daughter Lucretia, whose husband Captain Thomas Auld would later become Douglass's legal master. Douglass marvels at the luck by which they decided to send him to serve Thomas Auld's brother in the port city of Baltimore. At the age of seven or eight, "Freddy" landed at Alliciana (Alicianana) Street, near Mr. Gardner's shipyard on Fell's Point, to live with Hugh and Sophia Auld whose young son Tommy he was tasked with taking care of.²¹

In Baltimore Douglass circumvented laws prohibiting black literacy. Sophia instructed him until her husband Hugh Auld forbade

it, declaring that literacy would spoil him. Auld's enforcement of the legal prohibition against black literacy was meaningful to Douglass. He concluded that illiteracy was crucial to the "the white man's power to enslave the black man" and that literacy would be "the pathway from slavery to freedom."²² To achieve it he borrowed his young master Thomas's notebooks and filled up their blank spaces by copying letters. He found help from the "little white boys" whom he "met in the street," and from the "hungry little urchins," to whom he would give bread that the Auld household afforded him.²³ Finding the essay collection *Columbian Orator*, he learned the word *abolitionist*. The ideas in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's speeches to the British House of Commons on Irish Catholic emancipation impressed him as he used Webster's dictionary to explore their vocabulary.²⁴ On the dockyards of Baltimore he paid careful attention to nautical signs, such as the letters marking timber for placement on the ships.²⁵

Douglass's eventual attainment of literacy in Baltimore did not protect him from a dispiriting return to plantation life. After about five years in the city, the old master Capt. Anthony died in Maryland, provoking a family squabble over the estate. Douglass was sent back to plantation country for assessment and resettlement into the intertwined claims of the Lloyd, Anthony, and Auld families. He soon found himself credited to Thomas Auld (who had remarried after the death of his wife Lucretia) and living on a new plantation called St. Michael's. In January 1833 Douglass's luck took an even worse turn when Auld hired him out to Mr. Edward Covey, a young, desperate, and ambitious slaveholder with a reputation of using stealthy supervision and brutal violence to break down into servility those deemed troublemakers.

Douglass spent a year with Covey and describes the first six months as profoundly demoralizing, as the "dark night of slavery closed in upon" him.²⁶ Within a week of arriving, Covey gave Douglass "a very severe whipping" and many more followed.²⁷ After one particularly harsh assault, Douglass ran back to St. Michael's and appealed to Thomas Auld. He was disappointed with his master's unwillingness to interfere.

In the aftermath of returning to Covey, Douglass was inspired to take a different tactic. He resolved to fight, whatever the consequence. When Covey next tried to tie him up, Douglass resisted, bringing Covey down, even as he fended off Covey's henchman. He then humiliated Covey by pinning him down for two hours, holding him by the throat. In the *Narrative* Douglass heralds this victory, manifested in the blood that he caused to run on Covey's skin around his grip, as marking a spiritual resurgence. Douglass's portrayal of the fight thus flips the racial signs of slavery's bloody transaction, turning Covey's white skin into a text that registers Douglass's self-possessed dominance as a Black man refusing to be subordinated by the whip of the white slave master.²⁸ Douglass characterized the victory as reclamation of his "manhood" and he let it be known that "the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me."²⁹ Perhaps to preserve his reputation, Covey avoided another showdown. After serving out the remaining months, Douglass left Covey at the end of 1833. His next destination was the plantation of Mr. William Freeland, not far from St. Michael's.

Working on the Freeland plantation in 1834 was much easier. During this period Douglass gathered with fellow slaves for prayer services in the woods where he taught them to read. After a relatively smooth year of servitude Douglass was still yearning to escape. When he and a small group conspired, they were betrayed, arrested, and sent to an Easton jail. Douglass watched as Mr. Freeland reclaimed his fellow collaborators, leaving Douglass to contemplate a possible sale deeper into the South. Douglass was relieved when Thomas Auld sent him back to Baltimore, reuniting him with Sophia and Hugh Auld, whose now grown son Tommy treated Douglass like an enslaved servant rather than a boyhood friend.

In Baltimore, Douglass settled back into life as a laborer on the docks. Hired out to the shipbuilder William Gardner on Fell's Point, he learned the trade of caulking as he negotiated the demands of white carpenters who ordered him around, sometimes simultaneously, with varying degrees of disrespect. When free black laborers arrived, the

whites refused to work alongside them and some eventually attacked Douglass. He stood his ground but was very badly beaten, almost losing his eye. The Auld family was indignant on Douglass's behalf and Master Hugh attempted unsuccessfully to press charges. All the white witnesses refused to give evidence and the law of Maryland did not recognize Black people as legally credible to testify against whites. In *Sea of Poppies*, Gosh uses Douglass's beating to inspire Zachary Reid to leave the U.S. by signing up for a voyage to Calcutta.

In his next autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom* Douglass explained how shipyard bosses exploited the racist sentiments of white workers, whose opposition to slave emancipation contradicted their own economic interests. By fanning white workers' resentment of potential black enfranchisement, bosses distracted them from slavery's depressive effect on the working wage. Business owners thus succeeded "in drawing off the minds of poor whites from the real fact, that, by the rich slave-master, they are already regarded as but a single remove from equality with a slave."³⁰ Hugh Auld's sympathy after the beating did not stem Douglass's resentment over having to hand his earnings over to him. His high skill in caulking enabled him "to command the highest wages" but nevertheless every Saturday night he delivered these wages to Auld, who gave him back mere pennies. Douglass characterized this theft as comparable to "the right of the grim-visaged pirate upon the high seas."³¹

In early 1838 Douglass began planning another escape, this time as an individual. He executed it successfully in August, arrived to New York in September and, with the help of the abolitionist David Ruggles, headed north to Newport, Rhode Island and finally arrived to his destination of New Bedford, Massachusetts. His future wife Anna Murray joined him from Baltimore. (As mentioned, he does not explain the method of his escape until *Life and Times*.) On the way to the North he changed his name. While enslaved he had been known as "Frederick Bailey," leaving Baltimore he renamed himself "Frederick Stanley," in New York he became "Frederick Johnson," and finally in New Bedford

“Frederick Douglass,” a reference to a character in Sir Walter Scott’s literary romance of Scottish union, *Lady of the Lake* (1810).³²

In New Bedford, racial prejudice complicated Douglass’s attempts to secure an economic foothold as a fugitive from slavery. He draws out the injustice of this discrimination by marveling at the ships in the harbor, describing them as “the finest model, in the best order, and of the largest size” and the “strongest proofs of wealth.”³³ His work consisted generally of loading and unloading cargo and, while generally appreciative of New Bedford’s industrious bustle, he was disappointed not to find work as a caulker – a disappointment that he expresses more forcefully in his second and third autobiographies. Separated from his friends in Maryland, he nevertheless continued working on behalf of the abolitionist cause, lecturing on the terrible abuse that he had witnessed and endured. He met William Lloyd Garrison at a Nantucket anti-slavery convention in August 1841, as Garrison recalls in his preface to *Narrative*. (Figure 2.3)

Douglass continues his life narrative in the next autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom*. It delves into the racism that he experienced in the North, such as being turned away from an exhibition in Boston where his own likeness was being exhibited, denied entry to a Christian revival meeting in New Bedford, and barred from a cabin on a steamer bound to Boston from New York. The refrain to this series of insults was: “We don’t allow niggers here.”³⁴ Reflecting on these occurrences when in Great Britain, Douglass laments: “America will not allow her children to love her.”³⁵

After the publication of *Narrative*, Douglass sailed to Great Britain as a haven from U.S. bounty hunters who were rewarded for enforcing the Constitution’s Article 4 (Sect. 2, Cl. 3) obligating northern states to apprehend and return fugitive slaves to those in the South who claimed to own them. He spent twenty-one months touring, speaking, and meeting many famous politicians and writers. Noting the irony of his having sought “refuge from republican slavery in monarchical England,” he emphasizes the acquaintances and friendships that would make

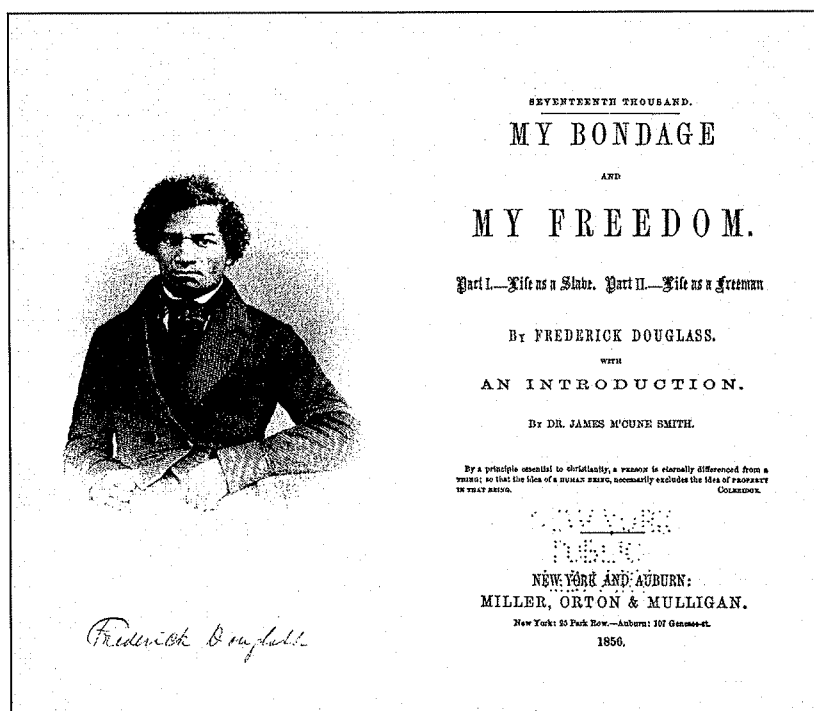


Figure 2.3 Frontispiece to *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Part I. *Life as a Slave*. Part II. *Life as a Freeman* (New York and Auburn: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855). Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

him feel truly respected as a human being.³⁶ He allied himself with the Chartist cause for universal male suffrage and linked up with William Lovett and Henry Vince “to launch publicly their Anti-Slavery League.”³⁷ He recognized mutual concerns with Ireland’s anti-colonial leaders, praising Daniel O’Connell, to whom Garrison compares him in his preface to *Narrative*. As Douglass put it in a letter to Garrison that was then published in *The Liberator* and in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, he spent “some of the happiest moments of his life” in Great Britain where he felt as if he had “undergone a transformation.”³⁸

From Great Britain he coordinated his legal status in the U.S., becoming a free person through a transaction that left him feeling ambivalently relieved, grateful, resentful, and inspired to continuing

fighting against slavery. His British friends and prominent social activists Ellen and Anna Richardson raised funds to buy him from Hugh Auld, who had purchased Douglass from his brother Thomas following Douglass's escape.³⁹ Douglass then returned to the United States as a freeman and expanded his fight against slavery to include racial prejudice in the North. When traveling by train in the Northeast he refused to sit in the Jim Crow compartments that segregated black passengers and he recounts physically resisting his removal. After a series of similar confrontations the train companies of the Northeast stopped quarantining blacks in separate cars as the Massachusetts state government threatened to pass laws explicitly prohibiting practices of Jim Crow segregation.

From Rochester, New York, Douglass continued his fight against slavery as the editor of the weekly newspaper *The North Star* (1847–1851), along with co-editor Martin Delaney, the *Frederick Douglass Weekly* (1851–1860), and the *Douglass Monthly* (1858–1863).⁴⁰ In the face of national racism, he was convinced that having a press in the “hands of the persons of the despised race” would be the most effective strategy of challenging practices that enforced racial subordination.⁴¹ But running *The North Star* with Delaney put him at odds with Garrison, who resented Douglass's separate operation, his unwillingness to concentrate abolitionist energies in Garrison's organization, and his emphasis on the importance of his press being owned and operated by Black people.⁴² Garrison's reaction echoes white abolitionists' earlier expectations that Douglass would deliver lectures at abolitionist meetings to elicit pity as a fugitive slave. But Douglass had grown bored with reciting his experience and having well-meaning friends such as Garrison “take [him] as his text.”⁴³ He wanted to denounce, analyze, and historicize the wrongs that he had suffered. Also Douglass had initially accepted Garrison's characterization of the U.S. Constitution as irredeemably corrupted by its accommodation of slavery. Inspired by processes of reforms underway in London and the U.K., Douglass disagreed and saw potential in the document as a tool in the battles for civil rights.

As Douglass edited, he continued to write and to lecture. He published the short story “The Heroic Slave” in the *North Star* and in Julia Griffiths’s edited collection *Autographs for Freedom*. In the story, Douglass dramatizes the 1841 rebellion aboard the ship *Creole* in which the enslaved Madison Washington took command of the slave ship as it headed from Richmond, Virginia, to New Orleans and proceeded to the safe haven of British Nassau, where he and his fellow enslaved people were freed. Douglass quotes a surviving member of the crew who recalled Madison telling him: “Mr. mate, you cannot write the bloody laws of slavery on these billows. The ocean, if not the land, is free.”⁴⁴ The appendix to *My Bondage and My Freedom* also includes excerpts from letters, essays, and speeches, such as “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852), in which Douglass charts a course for black Americans that implies a broader world market of which the U.S. is a part.⁴⁵ (Figure 2.4)

In early 1882, Douglas published his third autobiography, *Life and Times*, in the United States and the U.K. His lifelong goal of controlling the representation of his life echoes in behind-the-scenes disagreements that he had with his publisher, the Connecticut firm Park Publishing. In protest of including sensational and exploitive illustrations, he wrote to his editor:

I ask and insist, as I have a right to do, that an edition of the book shall circulate without illustrations for Northern circulation . . . [The] contract does not permit you to load the book with all manner of coarse and shocking woodcuts, such as may be found in the newspapers of the day . . . I have no pleasure whatever in the book and shall not have while the engravings remain.⁴⁶

In a compromise Park Publishing issued two separate editions, including one with and one without the illustrations.⁴⁷ Both editions were financially disappointing, as was a second and corrected edition that appeared in 1882, the same year that Douglass’s wife Anna suffered a stroke that led to her death.⁴⁸ There would be one more edition of *Life and Times*. In 1889, the Boston publisher De Wolfe, Fiske and Company purchased the printing plates from Park Publishing and contracted with

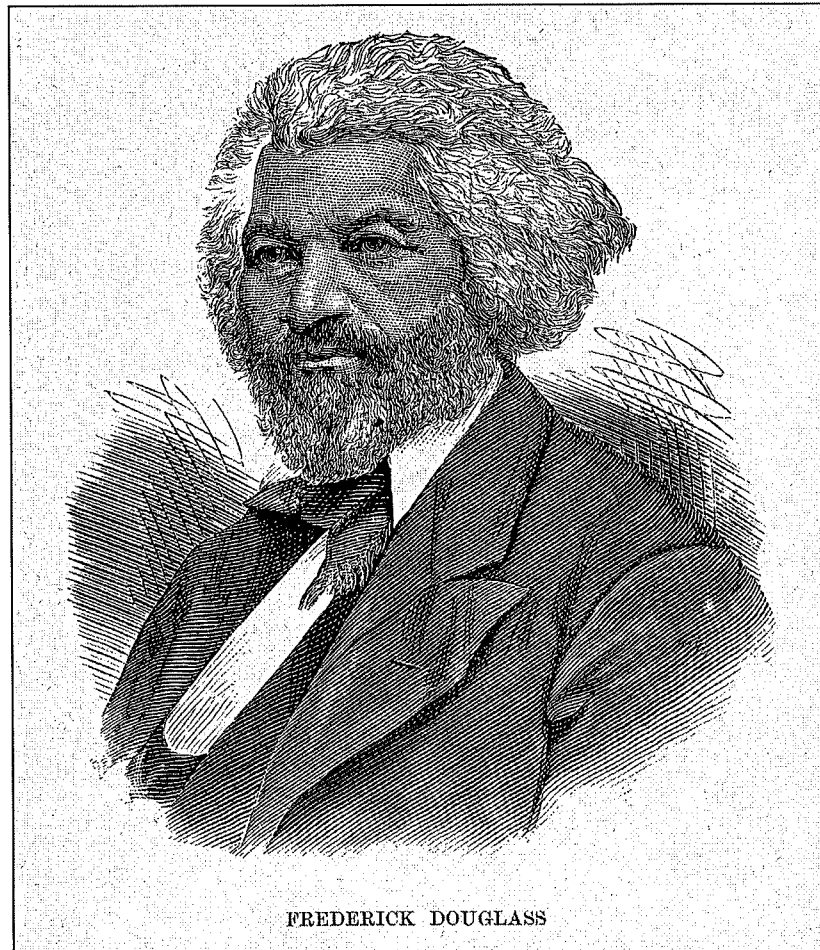


Figure 2.4 Frontispiece to *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, From 1817 to 1882, Written by Himself* (London: Christian Age Office, 1882). Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

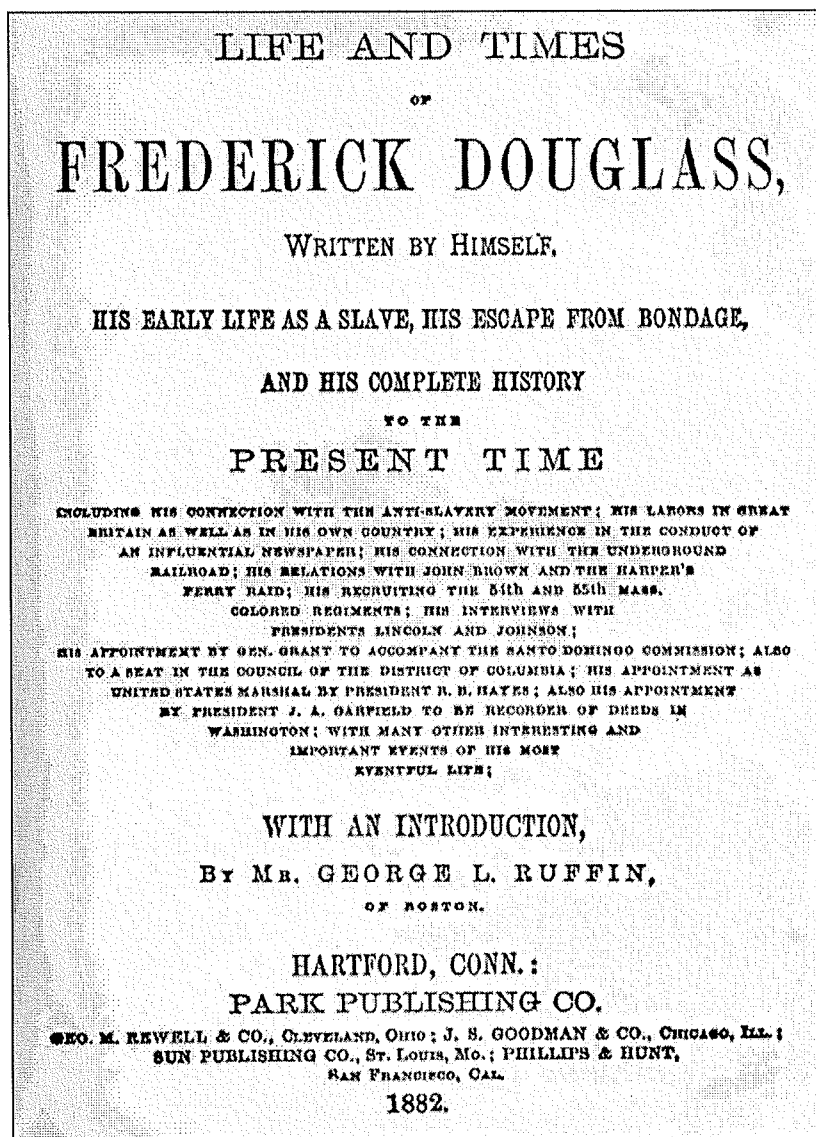


Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6 Title Page to *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. The U.S. edition is on the left and the London edition on the right. Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

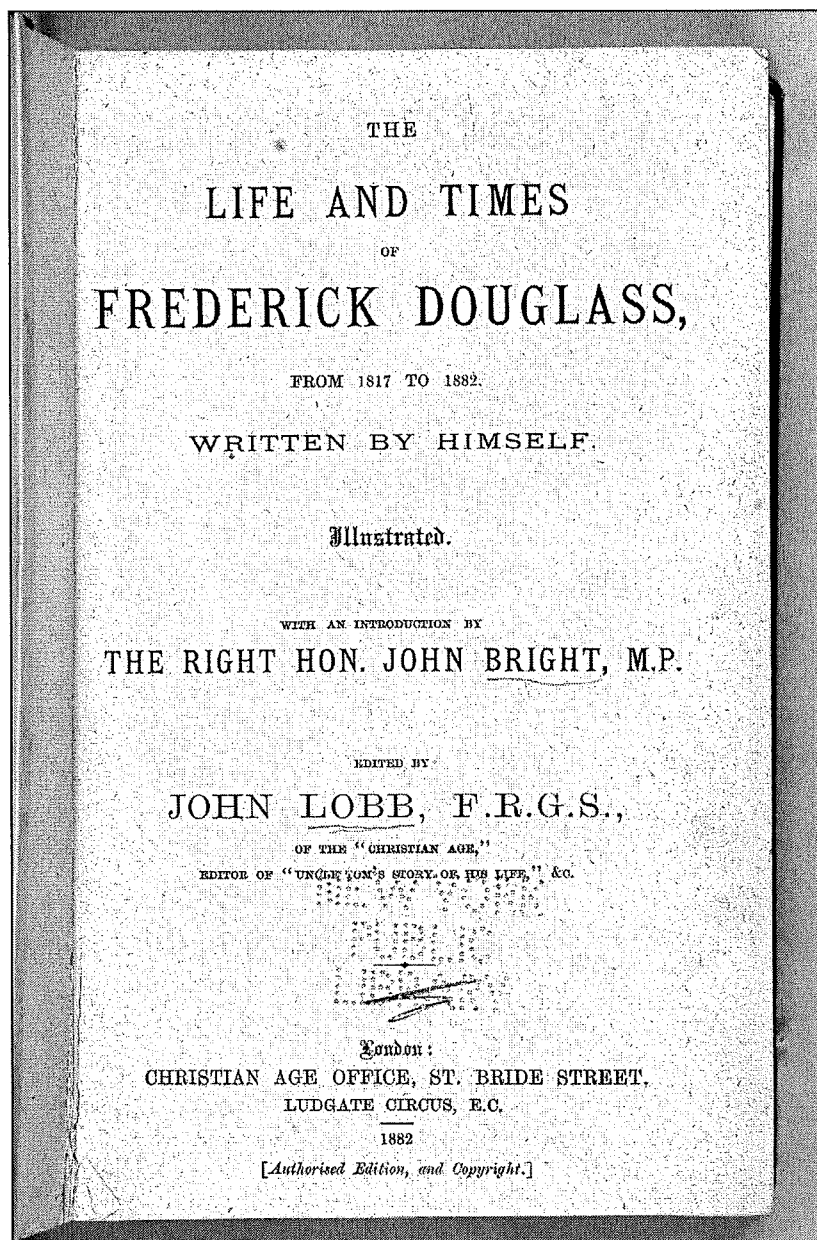


Figure 2.6

Douglass to supervise a new version. The corrections and new material that Douglass proposed made it difficult to adapt the old plates and Douglass financed half the cost for the final edition of 1892 (Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6).⁴⁹

The two different title pages of *Life and Times* suggest how Douglass faced slavery and the post-Civil War struggle for civil rights in an international context. The title page of the London edition of *Life and Times* (Figure 2.5, above) registers the transatlantic context of Douglass's career in its mention of John Bright.⁵⁰ Bright was a stalwart abolitionist based in the U.K. who contributed a substantial portion of the funds with which Anna and Ellen Richardson purchased Douglass from Auld.⁵¹ He was better known as a dramatic orator and supporter of domestic free trade policies who went after the anti-Corn Laws in the 1830s and 1840s. In *Life and Times*, Douglass recalls meeting Bright and his ally Richard Cobden in 1846, remarking, "One of the first attentions shown me by these gentlemen, was to make me welcome at the Free Trade Club in London."⁵² Douglass keeps his attention focused on domestic British labor as he remembers meeting Bright during a time when "Debate ran high in Parliament, and among the people everywhere, especially concerning the corn laws. Two powerful interests of the country confronted each other: one venerable from age, and the other young, stalwart, and growing."⁵³ In this confrontation, Bright and Cobden railed against tariffs that protected older estates from cheaper imported corn. Such tariffs inflated the cost of food for the working classes, running counter to the interests of rising manufacturers. Bright and Cobden voiced what Douglass calls "the rising power of commerce" that spurred demands to repeal tariffs and monopoly charters in order to free trade for private companies who would employ more workers.⁵⁴ Douglass links Bright's advocacy of free trade to his "very friendly disposition toward America" and the "loyal and progressive spirit which abolished our slavery and saved our country from dismemberment."⁵⁵

Life and Times gives account of Douglass tirelessly lecturing throughout New England and in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Canada as he

continued to edit and publish his newspaper before the Civil War. He wrote against the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) decision asserting that all black persons – whether enslaved or free – were *not* considered citizens under the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. On several occasions he met with the abolitionist revolutionary John Brown, whom he respected and admired despite advising him against attacking the federal armory at Harper's Ferry in Virginia – an insurrection for which the federal government executed Brown in 1859. Fearing arrest as a collaborator, Douglass managed to leave the U.S. for Britain.

In the presidential election of 1860, Douglass supported the Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln and praised his anti-slavery speeches in Illinois. He grew disconcerted by President Lincoln's attempts to accommodate southern states in order to prevent secession and avoid civil war. Douglass returned to the U.S. early in the war and helped recruit soldiers and raise funds for the famous all-black regiments of the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Infantry. In meetings with Lincoln, Douglass pressed for equal pay for Black soldiers. He supported Lincoln's re-election in 1864, but criticized his unwillingness to press for enfranchisement of Blacks in the South in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation. In a sign of enduring racism, guards at the reception for Lincoln's Second Inauguration initially turned Douglass away from the White House until Lincoln interceded. After Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, Douglass delivered a eulogy in Rochester and Lincoln's wife Mary Todd Lincoln gifted her husband's walking stick to Douglass.

After the war, Douglass remained fully engaged on the lecture circuit of the reuniting United States. He criticized President Andrew Johnson's reluctance to ensure black enfranchisement through policies of Reconstruction that supported the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act (1866) with requirements of political reforms, economic investment to benefit the formerly enslaved, and the presence of federal troops to fend off violence. Over the next decades the U.S. never kept the promise of compensating the formerly enslaved and failed to provide

an economic foundation for citizens whose labor had been systematically stolen for centuries. As for voting rights, Douglass embraced the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments as vehicles to ensure enfranchisement for formerly enslaved men but he did not insist that women be included. This disappointed Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, with whom he continued to work in pursuing the right of women to vote. In the presidential election of 1870 he campaigned for Ulysses S. Grant, the former victorious general of the Union army. From Washington, D.C., Douglass began editing the weekly newspaper the *New National Era* (1870–1874). Meanwhile in 1872 a fire inflicted a “grievous loss” in burning down his home in Rochester and destroying twelve years’ worth of back issues from *The North Star*, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, and the *Douglass Monthly*.⁵⁶

Douglass also became more involved in diplomatic efforts across the American hemisphere. President Grant appointed him to a commission tasked with investigating possible annexation of the Dominican Republic. He campaigned for Grant’s reelection in 1872. In 1874, Douglass briefly served as President of the beleaguered Reconstruction initiative, the Freedman’s Savings and Trust Company, but the company’s failure from corruption, mismanagement, and neglect was all but certain. In the same year that he resigned from that post he closed down the *New National Era*. In 1875 Douglass campaigned for the Republican presidential nominee Rutherford B. Hayes, but was disappointed when the political parties resolved a stalemate in electoral votes with the Democrats agreeing to accept Hayes’s Republican presidency on the condition of him adopting a conciliatory policy toward the South that ended Reconstruction. As Federal troops withdrew and the Freeman’s Savings and Trust failed, African-Americans in the South were left to trust the state governments, as Jim Crow laws flourished at local levels, segregating black communities, restricting their voting rights, and devastating their economic opportunity amidst terrorizing violence of white supremacist groups.

William Lloyd Garrison died in 1879. The two had reconciled to a degree that enabled Douglass to deliver a eulogy. Douglass had been reflecting on his own life in writing *Life and Times*. The title page of first U.S. edition reflects the continental scope of an ideal nation in the list of cities where it was published, from Hartford, Connecticut; Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; and San Francisco, California. The ongoing struggle against racism after the war echoes in his article “The Condition of the Freedman” published by *Harper’s Weekly* in the 1880s. In it Douglass evaluates the progress of “colored people” over the twenty years since the Emancipation Proclamation – a progress that he characterizes as happening *despite* the U.S. government. He writes:

No people were ever emancipated with conditions more unfavorable for good results. The Israelites had spoils of the Egyptians; the serfs of Russia had three acres of land given to each head of a family; the West India slave was permitted to live upon the old plantation; but the American slave was turned loose to the open sky without money, land, or friends, and, worst of all, under the fierce resentment of those who owned the land from which he must obtain his bread.⁵⁷

Douglass’s disappointment deepened with the presidential election of 1882, which ended the run of Republican administrations with the election of the Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland. As Cleveland took office and Douglass promoted *Life and Times*, his wife Anna died. In 1884 he married Helen Pitts, a government employee and a women’s rights activist who was white. Although Douglass’s children resented this marriage so soon after the death of their mother, Pitts remained his companion for the last decade of his life.

Relieved of governmental duties with the presidency of Cleveland, Douglass and Helen embarked on an extensive tour, traveling to Egypt and throughout Europe. In the U.K. he visited the British Parliament and traveled, giving lectures that advocated for Irish Home Rule. Returning to the U.S., he campaigned for the victorious Republican candidate Benjamin Harrison who then appointed him the diplomatic minister to Haiti in 1889. For three years he was caught up in failed negotiations

to open a U.S. port there. Earlier he had supported annexation of the Dominican Republic, but in 1889 he felt that the U.S. was trying to intimidate Haiti during a period of vulnerability and he gave an account of his efforts for the *North American Review* (September–October 1891). After stepping down from the commission, he continued to advocate for Haiti, helping organize its national exhibit for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Until his final day he continued lecturing. In 1895 Douglass suffered a fatal stroke in Washington after returning home from a convention address to the National Council of Women.

The Promise of Free Trade in Realizing Horizons of Escape

In representing and revising his escape from slavery across these autobiographies, Douglass envisions free trade as creating propitious vectors of outward movement that enjoin circulations of transnational economies and which reach beyond the immoral restrictions of slave plantations or Northern dockyards, where irrational racial prejudice limited Black individuals' contracting of labor to best advantage. His visions of moving beyond economies artificially restricted by racism give the lie to the laws that held him captive on the plantation as a boy, robbed him of his wages in Baltimore, discriminated against him on the dockyard of New Bedford, and deprived fellow African American citizens of reparations and work after the Civil War.⁵⁸

In revising his account of escape Douglass engages in transactions with his reader – transactions over which Douglass exercised authorial control, upon which he reflects at various points in his autobiographies. As previously described, Douglass's *Narrative of the Life* is an expressive masterpiece that flips the restrictive script of the slave narrative's conventional subordination of the enslaved Black subject by dramatizing the "bloody transactions" that objectify the enslaved as commodities. Douglass opens abusive incidents to deeper social, moral, and political analysis of the effective limits to physical punishment (the whip) in determining the broader meaning of the so-called baronial domain of

the Southern plantation. One dramatic instance of Douglass's script-flipping authority is his withholding the crucial information about his escape – information that the mere record of facts would obligate him to divulge. In Chapter Eleven he not only refuses to divulge the facts but relishes frustrating the reader's curiosity, writing: "I deem it proper to make known my intention not to state all the facts connected with the transaction," going on to admit that "it would afford me great pleasure" "to gratify a curiosity, which I know exists in the minds of many."⁵⁹ One gets the sense that he relishes this control over the information.⁶⁰

In his second autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom* Douglass develops further significance to withholding details of his escape – significance that highlights the growing power of abolitionist insurgency.⁶¹ He criticizes contemporaneous fugitive writers Henry Box Brown and William and Ellen Craft for revealing how they escaped, by noting that their accounts had reached literate slaveholders rather than those suffering enslavement. Douglass then augments the significance of his continuing to frustrate his readers, folding readers' curiosity into revelation of an imminent threat bearing down on slaveholders. Slaveholders' ignorance of how he escaped echoes their vulnerability to the "myriads of invisible tormenters, ever ready to snatch, from [their] infernal grasp, [their] trembling prey."⁶² He concludes by heightening the severity of this menace, appropriating Adam Smith's central metaphor of free trade equilibrium in order to threaten slaveholders with impending retributive violence, admonishing that "In pursuing his victim," let the slaveholder "be left to feel his way in the dark," and "be made to feel, that, at every step he takes," "he is running the frightful risk of having his hot brains dashed out by an invisible hand."⁶³

Life and Times divulges the secret of his escape in order to highlight the importance of federal authority over state jurisdiction and the international standing of the federal government. Published during the rollback of Reconstruction, his new autobiography widens his struggle for racial and economic justice. He divulges the details of his escape, in which the literal costume and performance of a free sailor enabled him

to leave Maryland. In appreciating the effect of the Seamen's Protection Certificate, he implies an international sense of commercial progress that equates freedom with the self-possessed individual sailor's opportunity to contract his labor. Before revealing the trick Douglass again reflects on the implications of keeping the narrative specifics of his escape a secret:

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. But even since the abolition of slavery, I have sometimes thought it well enough to baffle curiosity, by saying that while slavery existed there were good reasons for not telling the manner of my escape, and since slavery had ceased to exist, there was no reason for telling it. I shall now, however, cease to avail myself of this formula, and as far as I can, endeavour to satisfy this very natural curiosity.⁶⁴

In the sequence of his autobiographies, his control over relating the facts of his escape enables him to align readers' curiosity with political objectives: his first refusal in *Narrative of the Life* criticizes the restrictive premise of slave narratives and highlights his claim to authority; his second refusal in *My Bondage and My Freedom* threatens slaveholders with retributive violence as he embraced the press as a vehicle of abolitionist endeavor; and *Life and Times* satisfies curiosity over his escape in order to bring readers into a shared sense of struggle that recalls slavery in the midst of Jim Crow oppression rising with the end of Reconstruction and rollback of federal oversights.

Life and Times embraces federal oversight of the nation in developing the escape as a dramatic scene in which Douglass evinces pride in federal American strength to protect sailors in international waters, evoking the global contexts of free labor and free trade in which American sailors were free to pursue their opportunities. In an antebellum domestic context, his strategy for escape depended on recognizing the multilayered juridical contexts in which free Black people were compelled to prove that they were *not* enslaved. He first describes the "instrument" of "free papers" by which the State of Maryland required

free Black people to prove their status. He notes that in seeking to escape some used these papers, fitting themselves to the description of the holder in regard to “age, colour, height, and form,” gender, and distinctive scars.⁶⁵ Douglass did not know anyone with such free papers who fit his description and who would lend them to him. There was another option – the sailor’s protection certificate – that looked beyond Maryland to federal jurisdiction and the reputation of sailors as world travelers. Douglass writes: “But I had one friend – a sailor – who owned a sailor’s protection, which answered somewhat the purpose of free papers – describing his person, and certifying to the fact that he was a free American sailor. The instrument had at its head the American eagle, which gave it the appearance at once of an authorized document.”⁶⁶ The U.S. National Archives explains that these certificates resulted from the federal law “An Act for the Protection and Relief of American Seaman” (1 Stat. 477) passed May 26, 1796, “to protect merchant seamen from impressment,” mostly by the British Royal Navy.⁶⁷ Federally appointed agents in customs houses throughout the U.S. issued them after scrutinizing the proofs of citizenship such as birth certificates, papers proving naturalization, protection certificates from other ports, or sworn statements that were “taken and witnessed before notary public, alderman, or other officials.”⁶⁸ The customs agent kept proof of citizenship on file and forwarded “quarterly lists of registered seamen to the Secretary of State.” (Figure 2.7)⁶⁹

Figure 2.7 is a Seaman’s Protection Certificate from 1820 issued in the new State of Maine for someone named Captain Samuel Pope. The document describes this man according to age (nineteen years “or thereabouts”), height (six feet, 2 ¼ inches), complexion (light), hair (brown), and as having “grey eyes.” In the racist terms of the 1820s, Pope was “white” by virtue of not being designated as “dark,” “black,” or “colored”; however, there is no explicit category for “race” on this form and the adjectives describing Pope’s appearance seem to have depended on the customs agent. Beyond all physical description, Pope’s certificate

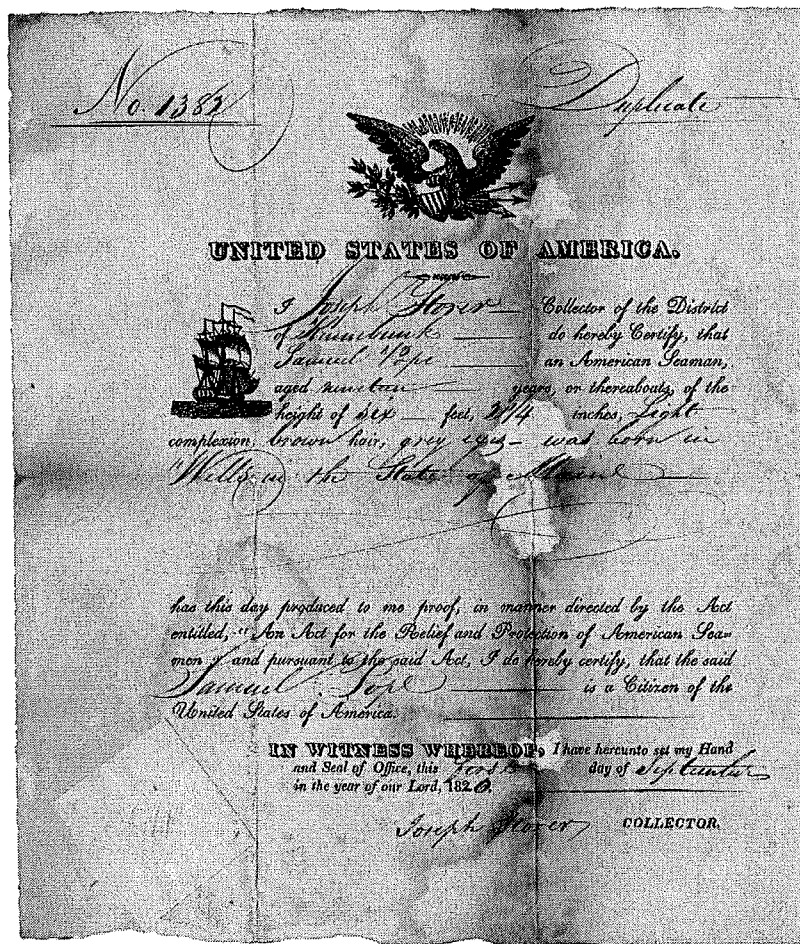


Figure 2.7 Samuel Pope, Seamen's Protection Certificate, 1820. Courtesy of the Coastal Carolina University and the Horry County Archives Center, <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/samuel-pope-seamans-protection-certificate-1820>

attested that he was “Citizen of the United States of America” throughout the Union and in seaports around the world.

Equipped with a similar protection certificate, Douglass had to play the part of the man it described as he escaped Maryland. He did not fear passing muster if quizzed on nautical terms. After working on the dockyards of Baltimore he was versed in the jargon and descriptions of major shipping ports. However, the certificate’s physical description was a challenge. It identified a man “much darker than [himself], and close examination of it would have caused [his] arrest from the start.”⁷⁰ He devised a plan to minimize scrutiny of the actual document. First he dressed up in a “sailor style” with a “red shirt and tarpaulin hat and black cravat, tied in a sailor style, loosely about his neck.”⁷¹ Then he arranged to have someone else purchase his train ticket and to put his luggage aboard as he blended into the crowd. When the train began to roll out of the station he jumped aboard. Next he had to face the train conductor who was inspecting the papers of Black passengers. Anticipating this, he trusted “the kind of feeling which prevailed in Baltimore and other seaports at the time”: “Free trade and sailors’ rights’ expressed the sentiment of the country just then.”⁷² There was a regional limit in the South for trusting such sentiment. Further south, the state of South Carolina had instituted the Negro Seamen Act (1822) by which authorities arrested all black free men in order to guard against potential rebellions. As Edlie L. Wong writes, the Act was “twice amended” in order to “increase its severity” so that any apprehended “black mariners” were put up at public auction as slaves; the states of North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas followed with their own legislation stripping free blacks – even sailors – of their civil rights.⁷³

Knowing that his “whole future depended on the decision of the [train] conductor,” Douglass played it cool as he was approached.⁷⁴ Douglass brings the reader into the compartment as the train’s movement jostled him against fellow riders. He observed the conductor taking a harsh tone in examining the papers of other “colored passengers.”⁷⁵ Nevertheless Douglass committed himself to playing the part.

Affecting a nonchalant attitude, he kept the certificate in his pocket instead of having it out and ready to present. Douglass continues:

Seeing that I did not readily produce my free papers, as the other coloured persons in the car had done, he [the conductor] said to me, in a friendly contrast with that observed toward the others: "I suppose you have your free papers?" To which I answered: "No, sir; I never carry my free papers to sea with me." "But you have something to show that you are a free man, have you not?" "Yes, sir," I answered: "I have a paper with the American eagle on it, and that will carry me round the world." With this I drew from my deep sailor's pocket my seaman's protection, as before described. The merest glance at the paper satisfied him, and he took my fare and went on with his business. This moment was one of the most anxious I ever experienced.⁷⁶

The success of Douglass's masquerade depended on adopting an attitude that manipulated regional pride in the power of federal authority in international waters. This was as important as holding an actual certificate. We are left to speculate on the conductor's degrees of national (federal), regional (mid-Atlantic Maryland), and local (Baltimore) pride when presuming that Douglass was a free sailor whose certificate warranted a merely cursory glance.

Although Douglass withholds the details of his escape in his earlier autobiographies, a sense of "free trade and sailors' rights" echoes in their allegories of plantation wealth that present free trade as a civilizing inevitability of historical progress.⁷⁷ The sanctity of individual contract resonates in his damning descriptions of Southern plantations as "baronial domains," his idealization of ships sailing from the South to the North as paths to freedom, his description of political solidarity with politicians in the U.K., and his imagined fraternity with sailors moving between ports of the world.⁷⁸ *My Bondage and My Freedom* and both editions of *Life and Times* (1881, 1893) describe Colonel Lloyd's plantation as a sort of "baronial domain" that was "three hundred years behind the times."⁷⁹ According to the masters' shared fantasy of the world, each plantation was "a little nation of its own, having its own language, its

own rules, regulations and customs.”⁸⁰ In this insular juridical context, Douglass’s reoccurring anecdote of the master’s garden epitomizes the slave economy as stagnant and perverse, at once marvelously fecund and morally depraved. On the one hand the plantation produces “tender asparagus, the crispy celery, and the delicate cauliflower, egg plants, beets, lettuce, parsnips, peas, and French beans, early and late, radishes, cantelopes, melons of all kinds.”⁸¹ And the plantation’s garden has “fruits of all climes and of every description, from the hardy apples of the North to the lemon and orange of the South. . . . Here were gathered figs, raisins, almonds, and grapes from Spain, wines and brandies from France, teas of various flavour from China, and rich aromatic coffee from Java, all conspiring to swell the tide of high life, where pride and indolence lounged in magnificence and satiety.”⁸² Douglass’s catalogue of commodities bridges to the Pacific and Asia, extending Jeffrey Bolster’s characterization of “the Commercial Revolution’s plantation system” as a “pan-Atlantic phenomenon.”⁸³ The ambiguity of how coffee from Java and tea from China converge on this garden plot suggests the plantation’s integration into a world market economy where Douglass senses freedom’s horizon.

In the restricted fantasy world of white southern patriarchy, slaveholding mastery extended to the ships connecting the plantation to the ports of Baltimore and to the markets of the world. Col. Lloyd owns vessels such as the *Sally Lloyd* – named after his white daughter – that transported goods up and down inland rivers. He operates these ships with sailors whom he enslaves. Douglass denounces the insulating objective of this strategy, writing, “Thus, even the glimmering and unsteady light of trade, which sometimes exerts a civilizing influence, [was] excluded from this ‘tabooed spot’ of the plantation.”⁸⁴ As Col. Lloyd fantasizes control over the river channels that branch through Maryland, his authority links up with collaborating masters on adjoining estates “who were as deeply interested as himself in maintaining the slave system in all its rigour.”⁸⁵

After describing the masters' transportation network in terms of their aspiration to maintain their authority while conducting international commerce, Douglass counters their logistical success at importing tea and coffee with a perverse moral economy shadowing the plantation's semblance of a thriving feudal economy. The baronial domains become stagnant pools of luxury that impede flows of distributive equilibrium and that defy national American virtues of free and fair competition in an ideal marketplace. Contrasting the masters' luxurious lives to the daily routine of those surviving as slaves, Douglass writes:

Alas, this immense wealth, this gilded splendor, this profusion of luxury, this exemption from toil, this life of ease, this sea of plenty were not the pearly gates they seemed to a world of happiness and sweet content. The poor slave, on his hard pine plank, scantily covered with his thin blanket, slept more soundly than the feverish voluptuary who reclined upon his downy pillow. Food to the indolent is poison, not sustenance. Lurking beneath the rich and tempting viands were invisible spirits of evil, which filled the self-deluded gormandizer with aches and pains, passions uncontrollable, fierce tempers, dyspepsia, rheumatism, lumbago, and gout, and of these the Lloyds had a full share.⁸⁶

Hence, the plantation's luxury is not only a façade that masks exploitation in the baronial domain. The ill-gotten luxury also destroys the slaveholders' physical bodies as it corrupts their spirits and souls. The unnatural gardens of slaveholding wealth are a dark and fetid moral wilderness in which spiritual torments to come trump the list of luxurious commodities.

In stark contrast to the perversely fecund garden of besotted slaveholders, the young Douglass sketches a landscape of commercial aspiration in which he senses the potential of his free labor beyond the plantation's horizon. As a young boy he recalls seeing two things on the plantation that appeared "wondrous things, full of thoughts and ideas": the sloop (the *Sally Lloyd*) and a windmill.⁸⁷ Both were such "objects" at which a "child cannot well look" "without thinking."⁸⁸ The objects are evocative in themselves but take on a fuller significance as Douglass

sketches a plantation landscape in reference to them and places himself in that landscape to imagine crossing a threshold of slaveholding authority. Standing near the windmill and looking out to the river, Douglass followed Lloyd's ships as they headed to Baltimore. The hope that he invests in these ships as they escape his restricted view even supplants the early affection that he had felt for his grandmother's cabin:

The little tendrils of affection so rudely broken from the darling objects in and around my grandmother's home, gradually began to extend and twine themselves around the new surroundings [on the Lloyd plantation]. There for the first time I saw a large windmill, with its wide-sweeping white wings, a commanding object to a child's eye. This was situated on what was called Long Point – a tract of land dividing Miles river from the Wye. I spent many hours watching the wings of this wondrous mill. In the river, or what was called the "Swash," at a short distance from the shore, quietly lying at anchor, with her small row boat dancing at her stern, was a large sloop, the *Sally Lloyd*, called by that name in honour of the favourite daughter of the Colonel. These two objects, the sloop and mill, as I remember, awakened thoughts, ideas, and wondering.⁸⁹

This description of the winged windmill echoes in his later description of leaving the plantation for Baltimore, standing on the deck of the *Sally Lloyd* to see that the "broad bay opened like a shoreless ocean."⁹⁰ The promise of free labor similarly permeates what became the autobiographies' most famous passages, in which Douglass addresses the ships sailing north in the Chesapeake Bay while he struggles to endure Covey's abuse. As he writes in *Narrative*, Covey's plantation "stood within a few rods of the Chesapeake Bay, whose broad bosom was ever white with sails from every quarter of the habitable globe."⁹¹ Having traced "the countless number of sails moving off to the mighty ocean," Douglass was moved to "pour out [his] soul's complaint, in my rude way, with an apostrophe to the moving multitude of ships."⁹² He addressed them as "freedom's swift-winged angels, that fly around the world" and lamented that "O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your protecting wing."⁹³ It is on the next page that he beats Covey, reversing the

literal terms of the earlier “bloody transaction” and fulfilling his promise to the reader that: “You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man.”⁹⁴

Douglass’s soliloquy has captured readers’ and scholars’ attention for more than a hundred and seventy years. The Prefaces to the 1845 *Narrative* both locked on to it, with Garrison describing it as the “most thrilling” of the *Narrative*’s “affecting incidents.”⁹⁵ Wendell Philips admires Douglass by saying that long before he had “mastered [his] A B C, or knew where the ‘white sails’ of the Chesapeake were bound” he already understood the “wretchedness of the slave” for the “cruel and blighting death which gathers over his soul.”⁹⁶ When Douglass finally makes it to the North, he echoes the Chesapeake soliloquy, writing that he “felt as one may imagine the unarmed mariner to feel when he is rescued by a friendly man-of-war from the pursuit of a pirate.”⁹⁷ Unfortunately, after the Civil War when Douglass was writing *Life and Times* and celebrating the potential power of labor unfettered by racist infighting, Jim Crow prejudices extended to the sea, where “Black men were finding fewer opportunities at sea” in the face of “maritime unions” that only “allowed men of color to sail as cooks and stewards or seamen in marginal trades.”⁹⁸

Free Trade Imperialism and the Failed Promise of Contract

Amitav Ghosh’s *Ibis Trilogy* invites us to ask: what happens to the rhetoric of free trade as we follow the sails beyond the transatlantic sphere, moving from Baltimore to Bengal, Java, China, and finally Canton? In Douglass’s time, such voyages implied the varying racial limits to recognizing democratic potential across commercial geographies that were not Christian, European, or white.

As noted, on a biographical level Douglass relished his alliances with British politicians at the heart of free trade debates. Douglass first met the free trade proponent John Bright during his initial visit to Britain in 1846. He also socialized with John Bowring. A political luminary, writer,

former editor of the *Westminster Review*, and translator, Bowring would head to China in 1849 as the British consul and superintendent of trade and become the fourth governor of Hong Kong in 1854.⁹⁹ Like Bright and Richard Cobden, Bowring protested British tariffs that protected landed aristocrats from market forces while raising costs of food. But the implications of free trade shifted as advocates of labor rights in the transatlantic context asserted national rights to export opium to China unfettered by the prohibitions that China had placed on the drug. While campaigning for a seat in Parliament, Bowring famously summed up his enthusiastic equation of freedom with commerce, declaring that: “Jesus Christ is Free Trade and Free Trade is Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁰ In the context of transatlantic labor politics, this pronouncement celebrates the leveling effect and democratic potential of free labor. However, in the context of international trade, the phrase evinced national chauvinism underwritten by professions of Christianity that equated freedom with Britain’s capacity to extract resources from pagan nations who were judged too barbaric or savage to be sovereign regulators of their trade with Britain. Looking to China, Bowring vilified the Qing government’s attempt to regulate opium traffic as a tyrannical restriction that violated principles of free trade, thereby justifying British aggression in the First and Second Opium Wars.¹⁰¹

In embracing the ideals of free trade Douglass seems not to have delved into the international implications of Britain’s trade policies relating to China – but he did adopt Bowring’s stereotypes of China. Douglass recalls in *Life and Times* that on his first visit to England Bowring invited him to breakfast “in company with W. Lloyd Garrison” and they spent “a delightful morning with him, chiefly as a listener to their conversation.”¹⁰² Douglass describes “Sir John” as “a poet, a statesman, and a diplomat” who went on to represent “England as a minister to China”:

[Bowring] was full of interesting information, and had a charming way of imparting his knowledge. The conversation was about slavery, and about China, and as my knowledge was very slender about the “Flowery

Kingdom,” and its people, I was greatly interested in Sir John’s description of the ideas and manners prevailing among them. According to him, the doctrine of substitution was carried so far in that country that men sometimes procured others to suffer even the penalty of death in their stead. Justice seemed not intent upon the punishment of the actual criminal, if only somebody was punished when the law was violated.¹⁰³

Bowring seems to have analogized slavery to Qing law because in his view both treated people as interchangeable objects.¹⁰⁴ In establishing the analogy, Bowring overlooks how the procurement of substitutes might have worked as a strategy of balancing punishment against goals of maintaining social interdependence.¹⁰⁵ His rhetorical point is that slaveholders and Qing officials are both oppressive tyrants. Douglass does not mention Britain’s colonial policies linking London to Bengal and to South China in a triangle of opium investment and smuggling that led to the First Opium War.

Douglass features a stereotype of tyrannical China similar to that of Bowring’s in his famous 1852 “Speech on the Fourth of July,” excerpted in the appendix to *My Bondage and My Freedom* and also displayed in the Kinsey Exhibition. Both the slaveholder and the emperor stubbornly isolate their domains from the civilizing currents of free trade that will inevitably breach artificial dams of despotism to establish the individual premise of socially contracted democratic governance. Douglass declares that:

Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up, from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same path of its fathers without interference. The time *was* when such could be done. Long established customs of hurtful character could fence themselves in, and do their evil work with social impunity. Knowledge was then confined and enjoyed by the privileged few, and the multitude walked on in mental darkness. But a change has now come over the affairs of mankind. Walled cities and empires have become unfashionable. The arm of commerce has borne away the gates of the strong city. Intelligence is penetrating the darkest corners of the globe. It makes its pathway over and under the sea, as well as on the

earth. Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated. – Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are distinctly heard on the other. The far off and almost fabulous Pacific rolls in grandeur at our feet. The Celestial Empire [China], the mystery of ages, is being solved. The fiat of the Almighty, “*Let there be Light*,” has not yet spent its force. No abuse, no outrage whether in taste, sport or avarice, can now hide itself from the all-pervading light. The iron shoe, and crippled foot of China must be seen, in contrast with nature. *Africa must rise and put on her yet unwoven garment. “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God.”*¹⁰⁶

In Douglass’s formulation, the “long arm of commerce” will annihilate differences of space and time in a progressive evangelical movement that also sweeps away those uncivilized peoples who refuse to accommodate velocities of exchange. In embracing free trade as a globally progressive force, Douglass envisioned a righteous force breaking down southern U.S. slaveholders’ walls of dominion and then the tyrants of China and Ethiopia into whose territory the light of free trade had yet to reach. Douglass fittingly concludes with a poem by Garrison that celebrates London’s Great Exhibition of 1851 for ushering in “freedom’s reign” across a world still enduring the lash of tyrants.¹⁰⁷

To probe the contradictions of such free trade idealism Ghosh puts Bowring’s quotation of biblical tautology in the mouth of the *Ibis Trilogy*’s most successful British merchant. Mr. Benjamin Brightwell Burnham, a former slave trader whose company specializes in opium trading from Calcutta to Macao, supplements his business with side contracts shipping coolie laborers and prisoner laborers out of Bengal. Burnham’s own dramatic trajectory from Liverpool to South, Southeast, and East Asia (beyond the limits of this essay) illustrates how generating wealth in the international marketplace depended on ruthless tactics of exploitation that found cover under the mantra of “free trade.” Burnham offers the most cynical formulations of free trade rhetoric in justifying slave trading, coolie exploitation, and opium dealing as civilizing endeavors. At one point he effusively describes the African slave trade as the “greatest exercise in freedom since God led the children of

Israel out of Egypt"; and, of the man enslaved in the American Carolinas, he asks: "is not he more free than his brethren in Africa, groaning under the rule of some dark tyrant?"¹⁰⁸ When Burnham, from his headquarters in Calcutta, learns that China will begin to enforce the longstanding prohibitions on opium imports, he vows that he will not "send any more shipments to Canton" "until such time as" the Chinese "can be made to understand the benefits of Free Trade."¹⁰⁹ He then expounds on the implications: "If it is God's will that opium be used as an instrument to open China to his teachings, then so be it. For myself, I confess I can see no reason why any Englishman should abet the Manchu tyrant in depriving the people of China of this miraculous substance" of opium.¹¹⁰ Burnham then reworks a planned voyage to carry a ship of prisoners and indentured coolie laborers to the island of Mauritius. Burnham cites Bowring to sum it all up, as the narrator explains: "One of [his] countrymen has put the matter very simply: 'Jesus Christ is Free Trade and Free Trade is Jesus Christ'."

Initially the young, naïve, and desperate American Zachary Reid is accidentally instrumental to Burnham's endeavors. He eventually becomes Burnham's protégé, however, despite having a secret passionate affair with Burnham's wife, and passing as white all along. Ghosh describes Reid as "medium height and sturdy build, with skin the color of old ivory and a mass of curly, lacquer-black hair that tumbled over his forehead and into his eyes," which were as "dark as his hair," except for flecks of hazel.¹¹¹ In the course of adventures Reid wittingly and unwittingly adopts various guises as he survives and then begins to profit while moving through the Indian Ocean to Bengal, Singapore, and eventually to Hong Kong on the eve of the First Opium War.¹¹² At the beginning of the Trilogy, when Reid's confidence wanes as he is about to pretend to be a ship's officer in Cape Town, he renews his courage by remembering the trauma of having witnessed Douglass's beating on the docks. Lying down on his bunk, he closes his eyes, and travels:

back across the oceans to his last day at Gardiner's shipyard Baltimore. He saw again a face with a burst eyeball, the scalp torn open where a

handspike had landed, the dark skin slick with blood. He remembered Freddy Douglass, set upon by four white carpenters; he remembered as if it were happening again, the encirclement of Freddy Douglass, set upon by four white carpenters; he remembered the howls, 'Kill him, kill the damned nigger, knock his brains out,'; he remembered how he and the other men of colour, all free, unlike Freddy, had held back, their hands stayed with fear.¹¹³

It is worth emphasizing that in contrast to Reid, Douglass never tried to pass as white (just as a sailor). As the Trilogy progresses, Reid becomes less of a sympathetic character as the dramatic irony of his opium exploits highlights a creeping alienation from those around him. As other characters fall away to the addictions of taking and trading opium, he becomes "so expert in selling opium to offshore buyers [in China] that he started seeking out new markets on his own."¹¹⁴ At the end of *Flood of Fire* he sits with Burnham and the mysterious agent Lenny Chan as part of a "triumphant trio" on the verge of making fortunes in opium amidst the carnage of the final year of the First Opium War.¹¹⁵ In the transformation of the naïve, vulnerable, free, albeit legally "Black," American Zachary Reid into an agent of free trade anonymity and speculative opportunism in Canton, Ghosh marks the geographical, cultural, and racial limits of Douglass's free trade promises as they extended to Asia in the era of the Opium Wars.

Ghosh is not setting Reid up to criticize Douglass's righteous assertion of self-possession in the context of transatlantic slavery, or his optimistic embrace of the rights of laborers in the post-Civil War United States. Rather, Reid's ascendancy adumbrates the line between the nineteenth-century civic promise of free labor and the globally extensive greed of free trade imperialism.¹¹⁶ One might say that Ghosh's Reid recalls an alternative "Freddy Douglass" being beaten on the Baltimore dockyard – a "Freddy Douglass" who does more than reassure his fellow Black sailors and laborers by explaining: "It's about jobs; the whites won't work with you, freeman or slave: keeping you out is their way of saving bread."¹¹⁷ In contrast to Ghosh's character, and as this essay has

shown, Douglass did not merely condemn white laborers for their racist violence. Instead he highlighted how white bosses were manipulating the racism of white laborers to distract from slavery's depressive effect on all wages.

In bringing *Life and Times* to Hong Kong as part of the exhibition *Rising Above*, the Kinsey Collection invites readers to distinguish Douglass from Ghosh's character Reid. For Douglass free trade established a civil right that secured a sailor's mobility across the antebellum sectional divide of South and North while implying intraregional divides such as that between Maryland and South Carolina and the international horizon of transatlantic transformation in London. As Douglass struggled against the racism against Black people in the northern port city of New Bedford, he does not idealize escape as a ship bound for Calcutta. Instead of "scattering" he returned from the U.K. to set up an activist press in Rochester and later in Washington, D.C. In the face of the tragic consequences of Jim Crow segregation, Douglass did not shrink into embittered resentment or amass wealth to buffer himself from activism. Instead, he widened his vision of democratic potential by drawing analogies between African Americans and Chinese immigrants as they faced brutal discrimination after the Civil War.

Free labor and free trade mattered for Douglass, as he imagined civil rights as the foundation for democratic potential in a U.S. economy based on wage labor – an economy with productive capacity transcending racist restrictions on any individual man's capacity to contract his labor. In the lecture "Our Composite Nationality," which he delivered in December 1869 to Boston's Parker Fraternity Course, he extolls this national potential by invoking the inclusive force of the first word in the U.S. Constitution: "We are a country of all extremes, ends and opposites; the most conspicuous example of composite nationalism in the world. Our people defy all ethnological and logical classification."¹¹⁸ He then embraces the potential of "large scale" "Chinese immigration," confident that the "spirit of race pride will not always prevail" and that "our

greatness and grandeur will be found in the faithful application of the principle of perfect civil equality to the people of all races and creeds.”¹¹⁹

As racism against Chinese people rose in California and the West, Douglass wrote the article “Coolie Trade” (August 10, 1871) for publication in his *New National Era*.¹²⁰ The article criticizes the brutality of luring workers from China and India to the West Indies on dishonest contracts in an attempt to undercut “emancipated negroes” whom white British employers felt “would not work for their former masters for such wages as they could afford to pay.”¹²¹ Douglass walked a tight-rope in acknowledging foremost the right of a “British subject in the East Indies” to “enter a contract with an individual or a company” while lamenting the employers’ disregard for recently emancipated black freemen of the West Indies.¹²² He then criticizes the “coolie” trade as an inhumane strategy of conjuring “cheap labor” that not only undercuts free laborers but also fomented racial resentment between laboring groups – racial resentment upon which employers capitalize. Drawing on his firsthand observations of Jamaica, he notes that the “subjects of this vast growing traffic” seemed despondent about their plight, bearing expressions “which might be worn by convicts serving out a sentence on a penal colony.”¹²³ He goes on to condemn the trade as “marked by all the horrible and infernal characteristics of the slave trade”; when traffickers fail in using “blandishments and cunning” to prey on “the poor and ignorant,” they fall back on “force” and “children, women, and men are stolen and forced into barracoons and on ships.”¹²⁴ This outcry continued the following week in his article “Cheap Labor” that ponders the phrase for its “vast and bottomless” “abyss of meanness, cruelty, and crime” concealed in the “fair-seeming phrase.”¹²⁵ Such advocacy does not erase Douglass’s superficial analogizing of the Qing Empire to Southern masters, but it definitively distinguishes him from Zachary Reid’s greedy partnership with Burnham and Chan. Reading Douglass and Ghosh in tandem today in Baltimore, London, Calcutta, and Hong Kong challenges new generations to distinguish between the idealism and imperialism of free trade.

Notes

1. Frederick Douglass, "The Condition of the Freedman," *Harper's Weekly* 27, 1407 (December 8, 1883): 782.
2. The University Museum and Art Gallery hosted the "The Kinsey African American Art & History Collection" from December 9, 2016 to February 26, 2017.
3. Douglass also revised *Life and Times* into a final edition that appeared in 1892. See Henry Louise Gates (editor), *Douglass: Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994).
4. On Douglass's importance to the transatlantic dynamics of intellectual history of nationalism, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13–71. For scholarly precedent that links trans-Atlantic slavery and trans-Pacific indentured servitude across centuries of maritime commerce and imperialism, see Lisa Lowe's *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) and Isabel Hofmeyr's "The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South – Literary and Cultural Perspectives," *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 33: 2 (2007): 3–32.
5. Citations of Douglass's second and third autobiographies will refer to Henry Louis Gate's edition of *Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994); for *Narrative of the Life of Frederick*, citations will refer to the edition edited by Houston A. Baker, Jr.; see Douglass, *Narrative* (New York: Penguin, 1986).
6. Jeffrey W. Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of the Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1.
7. Brook Thomas, *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 39. By way of summary, the promise of contract is grounded in John Locke's theory from *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (1689) that governments derive authority by virtue of being a social contract among free individuals who possess themselves and can therefore commoditize their own labor in contracts with other self-possessed individuals. In *the Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1962), Macpherson posits possessive individualism as the premise of self-ownership underpinning identity and civic recognition; and, in *Virtue, Commerce, History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (1985), J. G. A. Pocock explains how

notions of national virtue adapted to individualistic senses of self-propriety in the developing market economy of the eighteenth century.

8. Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (London: John Murray), 50. The *Ibis Trilogy* continues with *River of Smoke* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2011) and *Flood of Fire* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2015).
9. J. Crane notes that Reid's mention of "Douglass" in Ghosh's novel is anachronistic in the sense that when Douglass was working in Baltimore he would have been known as "Frederick Bailey." Douglass adopted his last name only after escaping to the North. Crane contends that Ghosh's anachronistic naming of Douglass is a strategy of creative juxtaposition, which deliberately recasts historical events to generate new potential for cultural critique. See J. Crane, "Beyond the Cape: Amitav Ghosh, Frederick Douglass, and the Limits of the Black Atlantic," *Postcolonial Text* 6:4 (2011): 1–16.
10. On the broad geographical, political, and social scope of brutalizing intimidation related to Chinese Exclusion, see Jean Pfaelzer's *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007).
11. In regard to the constraints of slave narration and Douglass's genius in reworking these constraints to realize autobiographical authority, see: John W. Blassingame's *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Robert B. Stepto's *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); William Andrews's *To Tell a Free Story: First Century of Afro-American Autobiography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and Eric Cheyftiz's second chapter ("The Foreign Policy of Metaphor") in *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan*, expanded edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997): 22–40. Saidiya V. Hartman provides crucial analysis of the gender dynamics of "escape" as formulated in slave narration and the ways in which conferral of citizenship of the formerly enslaved in the decades of Jim Crow replicated conditions of terror related to the white supremacy of slavery; see *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
12. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*, 97.
13. Douglass, *Narrative*, 37.

14. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, edited by Gates, 61.
15. *Narrative of the Life*, 47, 48.
16. *Narrative of the Life*, 49.
17. For a more nuanced and careful understanding of Confederate women's lives on slave plantations than is possible in this overview of Douglass's autobiographies, see Drew Gilpin Faust's *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slave Holding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
18. *Narrative of the Life*, 47.
19. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 165.
20. *Narrative of the Life*, 52.
21. *Narrative of the Life*, 74.
22. *Narrative of the Life*, 78.
23. *Narrative of the Life*, 82, 83.
24. *Narrative of the Life*, 83–84.
25. *Narrative of the Life*, 86.
26. *Narrative of the Life*, 105.
27. *Narrative of the Life*, 101.
28. *Narrative of the Life*, 112.
29. *Narrative of the Life*, 113.
30. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 330.
31. *Narrative of the Life*, 135.
32. *Narrative of the Life*, 146–47.
33. *Narrative of the Life*, 93.
34. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 374–75.
35. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 373.
36. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 370.
37. See Paul Giles, "Narrative Reversals and Power Exchanges: Frederick Douglass and British Culture," *American Literature*, 73:4 (2001): 781.
38. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 373.
39. See notes to *Autobiographies*, edited by Gates, 1057.
40. See Robert Fanucci's "Frederick Douglass's 'Colored Newspaper': Identity Politics in Black and White," in *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, edited by Todd Vogel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001): 55–70; and, Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Carla L. Peterson's "'We Hold These Truths to Be Self-Evident': The Rhetoric of Frederick Douglass's Journalism," in the same volume: 71–92.

41. Eric Gardner explains that in the nineteenth-century U.S., “the black press” was “crucial to *any* sense of black textuality” in “Early African American Print Culture and the American West,” in *Early African American Print Culture*, edited by Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 76.
42. On Douglass’s coordination of readership and the effects of building readership among African Americans through the nineteenth century, see Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002): 114–29.
43. Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* 364–65.
44. Frederick Douglass, “The Heroic Slave,” *Autographs for Freedom*, edited by Julia Griffiths, volume 1 (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1853): 237.
45. See Ivy G. Wilson’s “On Native Ground: Transnationalism, Frederick Douglass, and ‘The Heroic Slave,’” *PMLA* 121:2 (March 2006): 453–68. Wilson considers “The Heroic Slave” as Douglass’s engagement with US historiography that had ignored black agency; ironically, in dramatizing Madison Washington’s route to freedom in British Nassau, Douglass charts a “circum-Caribbean” escape that is a tellingly *imperfect* national allegory because it leaves readers with “a displaced cadre of transnational blacks whose affiliations and affinities are determined” “by their relations to other blacks in diaspora” (466).
46. See notes to *Autobiographies*, edited by Gates, 1080.
47. For analysis of Douglass’s career-long concern with frontispiece illustration of himself and of his mother’s likeness, see Michael A. Chaney, *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008): 17–48.
48. See notes to *Autobiographies*, edited by Gates, 1072.
49. See notes to *Autobiographies*, edited by Gates, 1081.
50. In regard to Jon Lobb, he was a Methodist preacher, editing publisher of *Kingsland Monthly Messenger* and *The Christian Age*, and an amanuensis for Josiah Henson in publishing *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, As Narrated by Himself* (1849); *Truth Stranger Than Fiction: Father Henson’s Story of His Own Life* (1858); *Uncle Tom’s Story of His Life: An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson* (1876).
51. See notes to *Autobiographies*, edited Gates, 1057.
52. *Life and Times*, in *Autobiographies*, 204.
53. *Life and Times*, 201.
54. *Life and Times*, 201.

55. *Life and Times*, 202.
56. *Life and Times*, 709, 1068.
57. Frederick Douglass "The Condition of the Freedman," *Harper's Weekly* 27: 1407 (December 8, 1883): 783.
58. See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*.
59. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 137.
60. *Narrative of the Life*, 137.
61. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 338.
62. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 340.
63. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 340.
64. *Life and Times*, 165–66.
65. *Life and Times*, 166.
66. *Life and Times*, 166–67.
67. See National Archives, "Citizenship and the American Merchant Marine: Seaman's Protection Certificates, 1792–1940," 1–2; (<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/naturalization/405-seamen-protection-certificates.pdf>; site accessed 26 February 2018).
68. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 5.
69. "Citizenship and the American Merchant Marine," 1–2.
70. *Life and Times*, 167.
71. *Life and Times*, 167.
72. *Life and Times*, 167.
73. See Edlie L. Wong, *Neither Fugitive Nor Free: Atlantic Slavery, Freedom Suits, and the Legal Culture of Travel* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 184. See also Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 194–214.
74. Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 167.
75. *Life and Times*, 167.
76. *Life and Times*, 167–68.
77. For a useful overview of the naturalization of property as the premise of social contract, see Chapters Four and Five of John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), edited by Thomas P. Peardon (New York: Macmillan, 1952): 15–30.
78. See Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and, Philip Sheldon Foner's *Business and Slavery: The New York Merchants and the Irrepressible Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941).
79. Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 160; *Life and Times*, 12.
80. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 160; *Life and Times*, 12.

81. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 191; *Life and Times*, 32.
82. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 191; *Life and Times*, 32.
83. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 11.
84. Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 159.
85. *Life and Times*, 12.
86. *Life and Times*, 33–34.
87. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 161.
88. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 161.
89. *Life and Times*, 13.
90. *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 211.
91. *Narrative of the Life*, 59.
92. *Narrative of the Life*, 59.
93. *Narrative of the Life*, 59.
94. *Narrative of the Life*, 60.
95. *Narrative of the Life*, 29.
96. *Narrative of the Life*, 44.
97. *Narrative of the Life*, 89.
98. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 215, 216.
99. On John Bowring's career and involvement in political debates regarding "free trade" in England, throughout Europe, and in China, see David Todd, "John Bowring and the Global Dissemination of Free Trade," *The Historical Journal* 51:2 (2008): 373–97; in regard to Hong Kong, see John M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2011): 21–24.
100. Carroll, *Concise History of Hong Kong*, 21.
101. For an overview of the Qing policies of regulating trade, see Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).
102. *Life and Times*, 207.
103. *Life and Times*, 207.
104. Wang Hui challenges the premise that Chinese dynasties were underdeveloped in regard to systems of law of commerce; in regard to legal and diplomatic authority of the Qing tribute system (an authority Bowring does not acknowledge), see Wang's *China From Empire to Nation-State* (Harvard University Press, 2014): 12–27.
105. To contextualize Bowring's gloss within the much broader social dynamics of Qing law across its political and historical geography, see Pär Kristoffer Cassel's *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford University Press, 2012); and,

- Li Chen's *Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes: Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
106. Frederick Douglass, "Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester" (5 July 1882), Rochester: Printed by Lee, Mann & Co, 1852; republished as "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? (1852)," in *The Portable Frederick Douglass*, edited by John Stauffer and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 2016): 38–39; italics in the original.
 107. "Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall," 39.
 108. Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, 78.
 109. *Sea of Poppies*, 77.
 110. *Sea of Poppies*, 78.
 111. *Sea of Poppies*, 10.
 112. For more careful consideration, see Kesi Augustine's "Zachary Reid's Transoceanic Performance of White Gentility in *Sea of Poppies*." *Journal of African American Studies* 20 (2016): 120–32.
 113. *Sea of Poppies*, 50.
 114. Ghosh, *Flood of Fire*, 391.
 115. *Flood of Fire*, 606.
 116. For development of the phrase "free trade imperialism," see John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review*, Second series, 6:1 (1953): 1–15; Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy, the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); and, Uday Singh Mehta's *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-century British Liberal Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).
 117. Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, 50.
 118. Frederick Douglass, "Our Composite Nationality" (Boston, Massachusetts; 7 December 1869) in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volume 4: 1864–80*, edited by John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991): 245; emphasis added. Excerpts of this lecture were reprinted in Boston newspapers (*Daily Evening Transcript*, *Daily Advertiser*) and in newspapers in Chicago and Peoria, Illinois.
 119. Douglass, "Our Composite Nationality," 247, 253.
 120. For the traumatic extent of racism against Chinese people in the era of Chinese Exclusion, see Pfaelzer 2007.
 121. Frederick Douglass, "The Coolie Trade," *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, edited by Philip S. Foner, vol. 4 (New York: International

Publishers, 1955); first published in *The New National Era* (10 August 1871):

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122. Douglass, "The Coolie Trade," 2.

123. Douglass, "The Coolie Trade," 2.

124. Douglass, "The Coolie Trade," 2.

125. Frederick Douglass, "Cheap Labor," *The New National Era* (August 17, 1871): 2.

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