

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Tlemcen



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**The Consequences of Slavery and Douglass’
Autobiography on the United States of America**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
a Master’s Degree in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Civilisation*

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Academic Year 2015/2016

Dedication

Every challenging work needs self-efforts as well as guidance of elders especially those who are very close to our hearts.

I dedicate this work to my sweet and loving Father and Mother whose affection, love and prayers of day and night make me able to get such honour.

I also thank my grand-parents for their love and their sincere wishes, as well as my little brother Imad and little sister Djihane for their encouragement.

To all my family and friends especially Fethallah, Walid, Mohamed and Hakim who are like brothers for me. I will always be grateful to each one of you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr Wassila Mouro as she has always been there for me, all along my work, bestowing advice upon me and always showing her availability. I will never forget your efforts Madam.

My sincerest acknowledgements go to the board of examiners namely: Dr Daoudi Frid, and Miss Meriem Mengouchi who devoted their precious time to the reading and evaluation of my humble work.

I am equally indebted to my reliable friends for adducing constructive criticism, providing insightful advice, valuable suggestions and moral support which, I must confess, gave me a dizzy round of pleasures beyond all the stress and chains.

Abstract

Slavery as a broad definition is a kind of foundation that is specialized in taking and possessing human beings forcing them to work without gaining anything. This system broke the entire world and touched particularly the United States of America where it was the main reason of several historical changes in the nation. Slave Narratives is a literary genre which saw the light in America. It was written by Americans from African descendants taking the form of an autobiography which narrated the personal experiences of those persons. The genre has its own models such as Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass. Douglass' autobiography *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* was considered as one of the most influential literary pieces of the 19th century in the United States. The author described his long journey from the horror of being a slave to the taste of freedom passing from different events that changed his life and several altercations with his former masters which contributed in building his identity and personality. In order to see the impact of Douglass' Narrative on Contemporary America, this work is divided into two chapters: the first one will deal with Slavery and Slave Narratives, whereas the second chapter will delve into Douglass' Narrative and see its impact on contemporary American society and mainly on music, cinema and literature.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Literature refers to several lettering where the ideas of the constant and global benefit connect with the shape and the expression and are considered as special or fundamental features in the example of novels, history and biography. However, this term has various definitions. The 14th century definition of literature can mean a refined learning over reading. Diving to the 19th century, scholars define literature as high dexterity of writing in a particular situation of an elevated imagination. Contemporary scholars define the term as a language technically applied to reach noticeable literary aspects as well as dispatching some important messages.

American literature by definition refers to different hand writings released in the United States and Colonial America and particularly destined for the American people. The genre developed through time especially between the 18th and 19th centuries. American literature is a patriotic tapestry that has widened in order to cover and be familiar with various writers that have participated in the American experience.

Like all literatures, the American literature has one foot in American circumstantial history of the country and the other in the literary experiences. It described the way America has changed. American Literature was extremely enhanced by different works published by African American writers who appeared in the Harlem Renaissance and by those who hold on in their same literary tread. American literature became particularly prominent and representative of the country as a whole because of the American writers.

Slavery is considered as the worst thing that happened to people so far. It is difficult to imagine how a human being can enslave the other using some brutal ways such as violence. Slavery may refer to some cases by which an individual is possessed by another called the master who dominates him and controls how he will live and what he will do. Slavery is considered as a turning point in the history of the United States. It started in the 1600's when some Africans were brought to North America in a Dutch ship and being enslaved. After that, they were sold to the

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settlers and were forced to work without gaining anything. After that, British colonists relied on the indentured servitude in which children served for a long time. However, adults mostly worked for about 4 to 7 years. The number of Africans in America increased through time due to an important reason which was the lack of the labour force.

The invention of the Cotton Gin led to the need of more workers which means more slaves and a terrible tension between the North and the South. The disagreement over slavery issue led to a big conflict between the two sides known as The American Civil War which lasted from 1861 to 1865; when Abraham Lincoln came with the Emancipation Proclamation which gave freedom to slaves and paved the way for the Thirteenth Amendment to completely abolish slavery in the country.

Slave Narratives are the accounts and the experiences of the former slaves describing the way they lived during that crucial period. The genre became an essential element in creating controversies about slavery and freedom between black and white Americans. The main aim of the Slave Narratives was to indicate the negative effects of the issue of slavery as well as the rights of black Americans. The genre made a reflection about the life of the slaves.

Slave Narratives generally took the form of an autobiography where the writer described his life from bondage to freedom. It discussed how slaves were captured and treated during the time of slavery. American slaves had to write those autobiographies in order to show to the readers that slaves are humans and they are able to write their experiences in a reliable way (Blight, 2004, para.1).

Due to several reasons, this genre was considered as unique and important as well. It gave the contemporary readers the chance to explore one of the worst epochs in the United States and also to learn from the faults of the old generations.

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Like any literary genre, Slave narratives has its leaders; its head writers who contributed a lot in the development of the genre knowing that those authors were former slaves in the example of Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacobs or Frederick Douglass who is considered as the father of Slave Narratives. Frederick Bailey was born in 1818 in Maryland and was an outstanding abolitionist. He succeeded to escape from slavery in 1838. He became a professor and published his anti slavery newspaper called “North Star” and his famous autobiography entitled *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* in 1845. This book was characterized as a turning point in the life of Douglass and the narrative itself was full of turning points starting from the squabble between him and his master to grasp reading and writing.

Therefore, all these observations lead us to ask the following research questions:

- What are the different consequences of slavery as well as the autobiography of Frederick Douglass on the United States?
- Why are slavery and the abolition considered as key events in the history of the United States of America?
- How did Frederick Douglass and his narrative affect his fellow African Americans?

Slavery seems to have been an important issue and episode in the history of the American nation in forging identities and reconstructing the United States.

African Americans may have taken Frederick Douglass and his life as a model or perhaps even used his principles and words to express themselves and to change their statues in the American society.

In order to answer the proposed questions, critical analysis will be applied in this research work. The latter has been divided into two chapters.

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The first chapter will be devoted to the definitions of slavery and the slave narratives. A historical backdrop about the issue of slavery starting from the beginning till the abolition will be provided. Then, we will give an overview on the slave narratives with its main figures and its importance.

The second chapter will deal with the impact of the slave narratives on the American society taking Frederick Douglass and his famous narrative as an example. We will focus on the analysis of the book with its main themes. Moreover, we will talk about the different events in the narrative that helped shape the identity of Frederick Douglass. Then, we will speak about the truthfulness of the work as well as the impact of his narrative on the current American society.

Chapter One

Slavery and Slave Narratives

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Chapter One: Slavery and Slave narratives

1.1 Introduction

Slavery is the most horrible thing that people faced throughout history and it was considered as the worst system ever of our world. Many people were surprised how a human being can make the other under his total control and dominance. Historically, this system is based on the investment, whereby the master owned the slave and exerted on him absolute power. Considered as a commodity, the slave can be sold, separated from his family and forced to do all the work his master requires of him so that he becomes a kind of material between the hands of the slaveholder. In fact, the word slavery may describe different things such as prostitution, prison, labour or even the sale of human organs.

1.2 Slavery Defined

In order to define Slavery, some important characteristics and conditions need to be understood. Historically speaking, the main characteristic of Slavery is violence in which the slave is totally controlled and threatened through the use of violence. This way, the slaveholder assures that the slave will be under his dominance and at his disposal. The loss of free will is also a very remarkable characteristic. It means that slaves are under control and they completely lose the power of making choices so that they become obliged to obey the slave holder and do what he wants. Otherwise, they will suffer because no one can defend them. As mentioned before, slavery is an exploitative system. The slave master gains money due to the efforts of slaves who obtain nothing but suffering and torture (Bales, 2004, p. 3).

Combining all those characteristics together, we can define this system as follows: Slavery is a socio-economic system based on the exploitation of human being which only works under violence (ibid).

Slavery had already existed in the United States for more than a century before it became a country in 1776. This system was abolished after the end of the American Civil War and the addition of the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution. People perceived slavery differently. As a result, this system has

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always been controversial, it inflames people's emotions even now and the world is still suffering from its impacts.

1.3. Slavery in America

The issue of slavery began when a Dutch ship appeared carrying about 20 Africans. The Captain of the ship set sail after exchanging the Africans with food. During that time, it was improbable that the 20 Africans were brought in purpose to become slaves because the issue of slavery was not established yet between Africa and the English colonies. In the beginning, nothing was clear if those Africans were considered as slaves or indentured servants because some collected old records did not precise the martial status of those Africans (Mr., Mrs. etc...). Besides, there was no year linked with their names unlike the white servants. Probably, there were some Africans who were considered as slaves and some who were servants (Thornton, 1998, p.427).

1.3.1. The Beginning of the Phenomenon

The British relied completely on the indentured servitude in the 17th century. So, they hesitated at first to set slavery in the new American colonies. Indentured servants by definition are men and women who signed a contract in order to work a set amount of time in place of food and a place to live. Then, after working a certain number of years, they will obtain their freedom (Billings, 1991, p.48).

Generally, adults served for four to seven years but the children served for much longer working especially on the tobacco fields. Above all, the transportation of the servants across the Atlantic were paid by the Virginia Company, however with the establishment of the headright system, the company attracted and tried to convince the merchants and the planters to pay the cost of transportation and in exchange they would get lands. Once the servants finished their years of servitude, they will get the same rights as the others (ibid).

In 1625, twenty three Africans lived in Virginia. This number had increased thirty five years later to 950 representing three or four percent of the whole colony

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population. This number rose and the colony had more indentured servants. Some historians such as Edmund Morgan said that the treatment of the indentured servants was mysterious from that of slaves. During this period of time, white indentured servants and black servants met each other, worked and even escaped from their holders together. Yet, there was a big difference between European and black indentured servants. The European could demand the help of his governments and ask for his freedom but the Africans could not because they simply were blacks and even their countries were colonized. Consequently, blacks lacked such appeal (Boles, 1984, p.68).

With the prosperity of Virginia, the British obligatory needed labor force. The landowners could not buy servants every few years because that was expensive for them. Besides, freed poor men represented a real threat to the ruling class of the colony. The masters used a new way which was holding Africans against their free will refusing to give them their freedom after finishing their period of indenture (ibid).

Slavery in America during the 17th century was the consequence of the lack of labor in the British colonies. Colonists tried to attract the workers repeatedly to the colony and they relied especially on indentured servants. However, this method did not fit and the workers were still despicable. Thus, the colonists tried a new labor force which was the African slaves. The colonists started to believe that the effective way to obtain labor force was to buy African slaves because there was a need for labor especially with the decrease in population at that time¹.

During this period, the English kidnapped, killed and enslaved millions of Africans. They were taken to America under terrible conditions and this caused hunger and death. During this journey, around 2 million people died².

Before the 1680's, colonists relied on indentured servitude considering it as a primary source of labor in the colonies. However, after this period, indentured

¹<http://www.novelguide.com/reportessay/history/american-history>

² <http://www.eji.org/files/SlaveryinAmerica.pdf>

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servitude decreased due to some reasons such as the inability of the servants to survive and to support the harsh living conditions and consequently they died or run away from their masters and looked for a job and gained their freedom. As a result, a real void was created in the labor market for the colonists³.

The amount of the tobacco produced in the colonies was the real reason of their economic prosperity. Yet, the growing of tobacco needed a large stabilized work force and a large amount of land. The availability of African slaves incorporated with the huge demand for a stable labor force led to the use of slavery in which it was a suitable labor force for the colonists. Yet, the situation was aggravated because of the drop in the population of the indentured servants and gradually slavery became more imminent. Settlers perceived slavery only from an economic view rather than a humanitarian one. As a consequence, morality was not taken into consideration (ibid).

1.3.2. 18th Century Slavery

During the 18th century, slavery continued to develop in America. The Legal Code was refined by many colonies when it was established in the 17th century in order to regulate slavery. This issue became a principal source of labor in the Southern colonies. There was no accuracy of the number of Africans transported to the New World. The first prominent slave rebellion was called The Stono River Rebellion in 1739. It took place in South Carolina during the harvest time when the supervisors pushed the slaves to work harder (Horton, 2006, p.254).

There was a fear from slaves in the Southern colonies because of their large number, but it was not absent completely in the North; except Charlestown, New York had the biggest black population in the colonies. A major incident happened there. It was a plan organized by poor whites and slaves in the British Colony of New York to rebel and level the city with a series of fires. It was known as The New York City Conspiracy of 1741 (ibid).

In the 18th century, a huge number of moralities occurred especially in terms

³ <http://www.novelguide.com/reportessay/history/american-history>

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of Africans transported to North America. Slavery became a major affair during the Revolutionary War which lasted 8 years from 1775 to 1783. Slaves who fought with the Loyalists were offered their freedom by the the crown. Many slaves got their liberty during the war (ibid, p.256).

The argument over slavery did not begin with The Constitutional Convention over slavery. However, it was here that the issue came to the peak; exactly in 1787. The southern colonies insisted on slavery, therefore, the Constitution completely avoided the issue. Although the delegates at The Constitutional Covention agreed to make provision for ending the Slave Trade, they could not declaim the leading issue of slavery (ibid)

Eli Whitney invented The Cotton Gin in 1794. The purpose of this invention was to speed up the elimination of seeds from the cotton fiber and as a result, an increase in the production of cotton. The South and their economy benefited a lot from The Cotton Gin. This invention increased the problems between the North and the South. With the rise in the production of cotton, the south needed more slaves in order to control and to work the cotton production. Thus, this invention increased the demand for slave labor. The invention of The Cotton Gin led to prosperity in the Southern economy creating a one-crop economy for the South. There was a pressure put on the relationship between the North and the South and their different perceptions of slavery knowing that the South Produced 75% of the cotton in the whole world. Southerners believed that the North attacked them because without their cotton English Industries will collapse⁴.

On February 12, 1793, the Congress passed "an act respecting fugitives from justice, and persons escaping from the service of their masters" called the Fugitive Slave Law. It allowed the arrest of fugitives and enabled the magistrates of the country to carry on the issue. The act issued a mulct of \$500 against any person who helped a fugitive. This act did not contain any mention of the words "slavery"

⁴<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bns6aKfrIjA>

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or "slave" just like the Constitution and was considered as a response to the reproduction of anti-slavery societies⁵.

Gabriel Prosser, an educated African American slave organized a slave revolt planning a march on Richmond, Virginia. However, the conspiracy was exposed and Prosser with a number of rebels were killed. As a consequence, there was a real tension in Virginia's slave laws.

1.3.3. The Regulation of Slavery

Slavery in The United States was set with a number of penal codes and statutes legislated in different states in order to conduct the involving slaves and free blacks and also to regulate the activity of slaves in the beginning of the 19th century. The question of slavery became both political and geographical with The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and led to a period of national debate between the anti and the pro-slavery states in order to gain economic and political advantage. However, in 1820, the congress was embroiled in the dispute over the way to divide the acquired territories into slave and free states⁶.

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 was a kind of an agreement between the two sides (the pro and the anti-slavery sections) with the purpose of regulating slavery in the western territories. Excluding Missouri, this settlement banned slavery in the new states of the Arkansas territory (ibid).

The Missouri Compromise recognized that the Congress had no right to impose over states claiming admission to the union conditions that did not call to those states already in the union and also established a precedent for the relegation of slavery from public territory obtained after the Constitution. After the admission of Missouri in 1821, no states were admitted until 1836 in which Arkansas became a slave state Michigan followed it afterwards and became a free state later in 1837⁷.

⁵ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h62t.html>

⁶ http://www.nbcnews.com/id/24714472/ns/us_news-gut_check/t/s-s-expansion-slavery-us

⁷ http://www.understandingrace.org/history/gov/expan_slavery.html

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The debate over slave and free states relatively remained calm for around 30 years. Nevertheless, many events happened in which it upset this balance by the late of 1840's such as the extension of a new territory by The United States as a result of The Mexican War and the return of the question of whether that territory will be considered as a free or a slave state. California joined the Union as a free state because of the gold rush (ibid).

The New Compromise was presented as a new bill in January 1850 by Henry Clay who was an American Politician. The items of the bill contained a clause which said that Texas would concede the land in which there was a disagreement on it and this in exchange for \$10 million to be paid to Mexico. Moreover, although slavery would still be authorized in the capitol of the nation, the slave trade was banned in the District of Columbia. It was also agreed that California would be admitted as a new free state. The purpose behind The Fugitive Slave Act was to calm the pro-slavery states. Among all the bills that formed the Compromise of 1850, this bill was the most debatable of them (ibid).

According to their tenets, fugitives had no right to a jury trial and citizens were ordered to aid in the recovery of the fugitive slaves. The special commissioners treated the cases of the fugitives. They were paid \$5 if a fugitive was liberated and \$10 if the captive was returned to slavery. Furthermore, the act appealed for several changes that made the process of filing a claim against a fugitive easier and effortless for slave holders. The new law was devastating. Many former slaves fled to Canada and left their homes. They changed their minds because they had been attempting to build lives in the North at the beginning. Canada added approximately 20,000 blacks to its population over the next decade (Farley, 2005, p.201).

Living as a fugitive in New York for many years, Harriet Jacobs described this period in her famous *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* as "the beginning of a reign of terror to the colored population" (1861, p.173). Although she learned that that slave catchers were used in order to spoor her path, she was one of the runaways who remained in New York. Many of them were captured and made back to slavery including Anthony Burns who was a fugitive living in Boston. Even the

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free blacks were captured and sent to the South with no legal rights and completely defenseless⁸.

1.4. The Abolition of Slavery

Both Slavery and the Slave Trade were confessed by people and considered as characteristics of everyday life until the later eighteenth century when the movement of the abolition took place. First in Great Britain, led by main figures such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson who helped to outlaw slavery in the country. The movement propagated from Britain to the entire world supported by humanitarian concerns and gained multiple victories especially in The United States where there were different abolitionists who fought for the abolition starting from Benjamin Franklin who was formed by the Quakers and was the president of the abolitionists in Pennsylvania⁹.

1.4.1. Causes of the American Civil War

Coming back to disagreements and political issues that began soon after the American Revolution, there was a number of circumstances that led the United States into a excruciating civil war. The problems between the North and the South grew more intense between the years 1800 and 1860. Although it was not the only one, slavery was the central issue of the conflicts. There was another point of major disagreement between the two sides in the involved taxes paid on goods brought from foreign countries. It was known as a tariff. Southerners felt that those tariffs were done on purpose and were unfair toward them because they imported a broader variety of goods than Northerners¹⁰.

Furthermore, taxes were placed on Southern goods shipped to foreign countries; a cost not always applied to Northern exports of equal value. Political power in the Federal government, centered in Washington D.C. was changing. As their population grew, Northern and mid-western countries were becoming more influential. Southern states lost the political power because of the slow increase of

⁸ http://www.understandingrace.org/history/gov/expan_slavery.html

⁹ <http://www.biographyonline.net/humanitarian/anti-slavery-movement.html>

¹⁰ http://www.nieonline.com/sentinel/downloads/curricula/civil_war.pdf

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their populations. People started to see the nation divided into sections and separated by different cultures, economies, and values as a result of the huge increase of one portion of the nation than another. This was called Sectionalism¹¹.

Despite of the existance of slavery in 13 colonies at the beginning of The American Revolution in 1775, many American citizens (especially those of African descent) started to sense that there is an inconsitency between the existence of slavery and the declaration of independence which always claimed human equality. In order to react against this contradiction, Northen states decided to ban slavery following the revolution. The future of the issue in the South was debated and some resisted hoping that slavery would finally disappear¹².

After the setting of the American Constitution in 1787, the interests of the slavemasters and those who benefited a lot from slavery could not be neglected. White Southerners argued thatslave labor contributed greatly to the nation’s wealth although slave could not vote. In the census for the purposes of the representation in the Congress, the Constitution provided for counting each slave as 3/5 of a person. The disposal gave the South an important role in the national government bigger than representation based only on its free population would have permitted (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2011, p.9).

Despite the fact that the Constitution did not employ the term “slavery”, Article IV provided for the return of persons who escaped from their masters “held to service or labor” such as fugitive slaves. After 20 years of the confirmation of the Constitution in 1808, Article I provided the end of the slave trade. Many questions were left non responded by the Constitution, especially, about the statue of slavery in the new territories obtained by the United States (ibid).

The failure to treat the comprehension and the honesty with slavery in the Constitution guaranteed a conflict over this issue and was particularly one of the leading motivations for war and those reasons were demonstrated in the quotation

¹¹ <http://www.mcallcommunity.com/nie/MondayStoriesSample.pdf>

¹² http://www.nps.gov/liho/planyourvisit/upload/cw_slavery_site_bulletin.pdf

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of the American Civil War historian James McPherson "the war began because a compromise did not exist that could solve the difference between the free and slave states regarding the power of the national government to prohibit slavery in territories that had not yet become states", then in another quotation written by Professor Dwight T. Pitcaithly who is a former Chief Historian of the National Park Service "The issue was not the existence of slavery, but the extension of it"(ibid). The government failed to treat the issue of slavery in the Constitution and this led to an upcoming conflict embodied in the Civil War.

1.4.2. John Brown's Revolt (The First Spark of the Abolition)

By 1859, a radical abolitionist originated from Kansas named John Brown attacked the Federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, with the purpose of supplying weapons to a slave crew who wanted to rebel against their Southern masters. Some of them were taken hostage and others were killed, among them the mayor of Harpers Ferry. John Brown was forced to stay in the corner with his followers in a fire engine house, Virginia militia and Federal troops were missioned to capture them all¹³. Commanded by Union Colonel Robert E. Lee who became later the leading Confederate general, entered the building and caught Brown with many of his followers. Brown was judged for his crimes, found guilty and killed in Charlestown, WV. It is true that the raid of John Brown had failed, but it supported the fondness of Northern abolitionists who made him a hero and a martyr. It was announced that bells ringed in memory of John Brown in Northern cities on the day he was hanged out (ibid).

This incident inflamed the emotions in the South, in which Southern leaders perceived this as a mention of how the interests of their region were little represented in the Federal Law, which they considered well-disposed to fugitives and anti-slavery organizations. The debate reached its peak. Southern politicians superficially charged that their voices were not heard in the Congress. Some

¹³ http://www.nieonline.com/sentinel/downloads/curricula/civil_war.pdf

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Southern states wanted to secede or even break away from the United States of America and wanted the self-government (ibid).

When Abraham Lincoln was elected as a President of the country in 1860, emotions of the citizens reached a higher point. He was a member of anti-slavery Republican Party and he wanted to keep the United States united and all the new territories free from slavery. Many Southerners had fear from Lincoln, they were afraid that the new president will not treat them fairly. The growing strength of the Republican Party, viewed as the party friendly to Northern businessmen and abolitionists, and the last step to achieve will be the election of that party's candidate who will represent them (ibid).

1.4.3. The Emancipation Proclamation

The American Civil War began in order to restore the union and not to abolish slavery. In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln got the idea of expanding the goals of the war for the purpose of saving the country. The Emancipation Proclamation made a radical change in the aims of Lincoln's policy. As a commander in Chief, Abraham Lincoln declared the liberation of enslaved African Americans who lived in Confederacy states knowing that they were in rebellion¹⁴.

The Proclamation was described by Frederick Douglass as "the first step on the part of the nation in its departure from the thralldom of the ages". Over the examination of Lincoln's related documents and the accounts of black Americans during the civil war, people could go into the obstacles and decisive choices that permitted to build this union (ibid).

The Emancipation Proclamation was considered among the most important documents in the history of The United States. Nevertheless, it was also misconceived. As a definition, The Emancipation Proclamation was an executive order released by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. It made a radical change in the status of more than 3 million people in the areas of the South from "slave" to "free". When a slave escaped from the Confederate government by

¹⁴ <http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/emancipation-proclamation-freedoms-first-steps>

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different ways, it became legally free which gave this proclamation a practical effect. The Emancipation Proclamation was established as a procedure in the civil war particularly conducted to the areas of rebellion and the parts of the executive branch of the United States (Dirck, 2007, p.102).

The Emancipation Proclamation announced the freedom of slaves in ten states which was considered as a big achievement. Even though the proclamation did not ban slavery in the the United States, it gave hope to millions of Americans and transformed the character of the war paving the way for the Thirteenth Amendment to completely abolish slavery. Furtheromre, it declared finally the admission of black men into the Union Army and Navy allowing them to become liberators. By the end of the Civil War, over 200.000 black soldiers and sailors fought for the union and freedom. Slaves really wanted their freedom from the beginning of the Civil War¹⁵.

The Emancipation Proclamation confirmed their persistence that this war for the restoration of the union must become a war for their freedom. Moreover, it fortified the union both military and politically. As a great event which paved the way for the abolition of the issue of slavery, The Emancipation Proclamation was considered among the great documents of human freedom. The Department of State preserved this document with other proclamations in a large volume for many years. The volume containing the Emancipation Proclamation was transmitted in 1936 to the National Archives of the United States from the departement of States (ibid).

From a legal point of view, the Emancipation Proclamation was a brilliant move because the president is not favoured by the constitution or even giving civil liberties to a specific people. Yet, the U.S. president has the right in wartime to defend his people and gives a total protection of the social securtiy of the country. The Emancipation Proclamation was not approved by the congress or even voted; Abraham Lincoln made it under his power as a commander in chief. This was

¹⁵ http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/

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similar to a monarchy because Lincoln released the proclamation as a king issued an act¹⁶.

There is a main similarity between the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment. Both have the notion and the purpose to free slaves. Unlike the Emancipation Proclamation which was imposed as a power of the commander in chief. The 13th Amendment followed the legislative procedures summarized in the Constitution in order to create a radical and permanent change to the supreme law in The United States. It was voted on in the Congress and established by the majority of states. There is a relationship between the two documents in which the 13th amendment is the official means by which the Emancipation Proclamation was executed (ibid).

Although January, 1st, 1863, was the date in which the Emancipation Proclamation took place in The United States, the principles of the Proclamation had been planned by President Lincoln months before. He proposed the idea of the Emancipation Proclamation to his government in the summer of 1862 as a war measure with the aim of paralyzing the Confederacy. Lincoln thought that the Confederacy could not use slaves as laborers to support the army once they were freed in the Southern States¹⁷, therefore, handicapping the effectiveness of the Confederate war effort. However, Lincoln needed to demonstrate that the Union government is capable to impose the Proclamation and protect the freed slaves. On September 22, 1862, the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued, this introductory proclamation took effect three months later on January 1, 1863 (ibid).

Around 20,000 to 50,000 slaves were freed in some areas of nine out of ten states in which rebellion was repressed. As the Union army dominated the Confederate regions, the proclamation provided the legal structure for freeing more than 3 million slaves in those regions. Before the proclamation and in accordance to The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, escaped slaves were returned to their masters or caught in camps for later return. The proclamation applied only to slaves in

¹⁶ http://www.ehow.com/info_8676471_pros-cons-emancipation-proclamation.html

¹⁷ <http://www.civilwar.org/150th-anniversary/emancipation-proclamation-150.html>

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Confederate –held lands and not used in the four slave states Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, and Missouri, nor to Tennessee and Lower Louisiana and eliminated the departments of Virginia in order to form the state of West Virginia¹⁸.

Also, the proclamation excluded particularly some areas which were under the domination of the Union Army. After some actions done by separate states and also the confirmation of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865 which made slavery except for those properly condemned of a crime or illegal subject to the United States jurisdiction, the Emancipation came to those states finally.

The Emancipation had a deep and an immediate effect on the course of the war. Freeing the slaves became the official aim of the war and gathering crusty reactions from both the North and the South. The Proclamation paved the way for the Thirteenth Amendment, embraced on December 6, 1865, which officially banned slavery in the United States¹⁹.

1.5. African American Literature (Slave Narratives)

Literature by definition refers to different writings to which the connection between the expression, form with ideas of universal attention are considered as important qualities such as history, poetry, essays and novels. However, it had several definitions throughout time starting from the 14th century definition which showed that the meaning of literature is a polite learning through reading to the modern definition which indicates that this art is used with an artistic method with the purpose of reaching recognized literary features and to transmit some significant messages²⁰.

Literature written by Americans from African origins is called African American Literature. It is specifically intended for black Americans. The beginning

¹⁸ <https://quizlet.com/41354300/civil-war-flash-cards/>

¹⁹ <http://www.civilwar.org/150th-anniversary/emancipation-proclamation-150.html>

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgZOQVJtvR8>

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of this genre dates back to 1619 when African slaves reached the new world in which they used to write their own language and literature²¹.

1.5.1. An Introduction

African American Literature developed in the 18th and the 19th centuries with several writers in the example of poet Phillis Wheatley and famous reciter Frederick Douglass. It reached the peak with the Harlem Renaissance. This genre persists nowadays with authors such as Walter Mosley and Toni Morrison who have been classified among the head writers in the United States. African American Literature explored many issues and themes such as racism, slavery, African American culture and African Americans into the whole American society²².

Afterwards, Slave Narratives appeared and became very important in opening debates between blacks and whites about the issue of slavery and liberty. The most effective Slave Narratives were destined to enlighten white readers particularly about the facts of slavery and the humanity and the rights of black people as well. Nowadays, American universities affirm the strength of this genre. Slave narratives were used to evoke the thinking of their students and also to create an overall debate between the readers especially in the issues of social justice, race and the meaning of freedom²³.

The recollecting and the understanding of the historical context by which the narratives were made is very essential when reading slave narratives. This genre represents a reflection of the setting and the conditions of the life of the slaves. Moreover, it is an illumination and an opening of a world which is important for people to discover (Crew, Goodman & Gates, 2003, p.13)

1.5.2. An Overview on Slave Narratives

The Slave Narrative is a literary genre penned by African slaves who lived in America especially during the mid 1700's and the late 1800's. This genre takes the

²¹ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3057200253/african-american-literature-overview.html>

²² http://www.black-history-month.co.uk/sitea/articles/African_American_literature.html

²³ <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/intro.html>

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form of an autobiography which describes the author's life in details from slavery to liberty. Slave Narratives contain a unique structure and also special themes. Slave Narratives took two forms. The slave could write his own narratives alone or he could dictate them to another one who would take in charge the process of writing. The major issues discussed in the Slave Narratives were about the terror of capture and the brutal treatment of the slaves²⁴.

There were some proofs that the writers overdrawed in their descriptions in some of their accounts because it was a way to support the abolitionists' movement. Nevertheless, Slave Narratives cleared up a horrible period in the American history (ibid).

Nearly sixty five to seventy Slave Narratives were published between 1760 and 1860 in America and considered as a way to explore the reality of slavery. These accounts were kind of witness to the evolution of writing in a country where you are always outcast by its people and considered as non human as well. There were several reasons that pushed American Slaves to write their own stories. First, they wanted to demonstrate that they could recount their personal experiences in an authoritative way. Then, slaves were under a huge tension and they wanted to prove their humanity in a world full of racial discrimination. Furthermore, they wrote their accounts to show their literary and psychological abilities but also their spiritual freedom (Blight, 2004, para.1).

What was written by American slaves was not only their journey from being enslaved to their freedom but also interesting acts. Professor William L. Andrews considered it as "free storytelling" (1988, p.11). American slave narratives focused a lot on the rituals of the narrator passing from slavery to freedom (ibid).

1.5.3. Main Figures and the Importance of the Genre

Some important people were considered as icons of Slave Narratives. They suffered a lot from slavery and tasted all kinds of torture and pain. After that, they wrote their own life on these accounts.

²⁴ <http://study.com/academy/lesson/american-slave-narrative-definition-lesson-quiz.html>

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The first one is Olaudah Equiano. He was born in Nigeria in the 1740's and was kidnapped and being enslaved at the age of 11. He was taken to Virginia when he was bought by an English naval officer who gave him the name of Gustavus Vassa and he was able to educate himself. After becoming a trader, he bought his freedom and wrote the first remarkable slave narrative entitled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of O. Equiano, or G. Vassa, The African*, in which he described his pre-slavery life in Africa as well as the terror of the slave trade²⁵.

Frederick Douglass was also among the leaders of this genre. He was born a slave in Maryland in 1818 and succeeded to escape from slavery in 1838, and lived in Massachusetts. After that, he became a lecturer and wrote the famous and the most influential narrative by a former slave entitled *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* published in 1845. This book became a sensation and with it Douglass became a great leader of the American abolition movement²⁶.

One of the well-known figures is Harriet Jacobs. Just like Frederick Douglass, she was born a slave in 1813 in North Carolina. She had the opportunity to be educated by her owner. Jacobs left to a relative after the death of the woman who owned her. She suffered from the sexual abuse of her master when she was a teenager. After that, she spent some years with her grandmother and finally settled in Massachusetts. In 1862, she wrote her memoir called *Incidents in The Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* and it was written under the pen name of Linda Brent²⁷.

William Wells Brown was born a slave in Kentucky in 1815. Before he became adult, he had been bought by different masters. At the age of 19, his master took him by mistake to Ohio which was a free state in which he succeeded to escape from him. He met a Quaker who was against slavery giving him a place to stay. He moved to Massachusetts and wrote his memoir under the title of *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself* published in 1847. The

²⁵<http://history1800s.about.com/od/slaveryinamerica/a/clslnarratives.html>

²⁶<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Su-4JBEIhXY>

²⁷<http://history1800s.about.com/od/slaveryinamerica/a/clslnarratives.html>

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book became well-known in the country in which he was published in several British editions and distributed four editions in The United States (ibid).

Slave Narratives is a unique genre and very important as well due to many reasons. It contributed a lot in the American history making people better understand how slavery was like, and by representing the life of slaves and their long journey to freedom. Furthermore, it gave people the opportunity to learn from the experience of slaves and from the mistakes of the previous generations. Moreover, it took the form of a historical document which tackled a harmful issue containing essential informations about it.

Slave narratives' task was not only to tell people about the story of the subsistence of the slaves but it used a special and unique voice which participates in their convincing power. The 21st Century readers of this genre found these accounts difficult to understand and declamatory. However, it was persuasive for them because it shed lights into a very important and maybe the worst period in the American history²⁸.

1.6. Conclusion

In the first chapter and in order to put the research on a very important and specific subject which is the abolition of slavery in the United States, we started with a definition of the term "Slavery" giving the key characteristics and conditions that made this issue as it is. After that, a historical background about this phenomenon was provided, starting by the first Africans who came to Virginia in 1619 to the indentured servitude moving by slavery in the 18th century in which there was the first notable rebellion (The Stono River Rebellion 1739) and the regulation of slavery. Next, as shown above, the abolition of slavery was tackled, starting from the causes of the American Civil war, then the raid of the radicalist John Brown and then the Emancipation Proclamation which paved the way for the Thirteenth Amendment to completely abolish slavery in The United States.

²⁸<http://the-artifice.com/importance-of-american-slave-narrative>

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The abolition of slavery was considered as a main event in the history of the United States due to several reasons. First, it came after a horrible system which lasted long time in the country (from 1620 to 1865) destroying the fate of people and doing harm to innocent ones. Gerald Foster said that slavery is the history of their nation, Besides, during the reconstruction African Americans became owners of properties particularly in the south and some of them established independent places in which they could freely live there.

Moreover, the abolition of slavery in the United States had a large effect on the writings of the black Americans. The African American thinkers looked for the efficient way that they could use their freedom in order to understand clearly who they are. This permitted those thinkers to write continuously. Thinkers such as W.E.B. DuBois and T. Washington were the leading writers who were occupied by the post slavery era for the blacks in the United States; this was the crucial topic which was collected by the following writers who discussed it later. Due to the abolition of slavery, the African American writers were read by a huge audience. Furthermore, it was the first time that a large white audience had the opportunity to explore the talent and the ability of the African American abolitionists to write. The abolition of slavery identifies the African American literature which became very popular afterwards.

Chapter Two

Douglass' Narrative: A Critical Reading and the Impact on the American Society

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2.1. Introduction

Douglass' autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* was among the first slave narratives written by a former slave. It was also written differently in a new autobiographical form, glorifying the conflicts, the struggles and the success of an individual in place of recounting a story following a chronological order which is the classic form of an autobiography. Frederick Douglass consolidated different ideologies and philosophies in his work because he was very inspired by Henry Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson who were considered as leaders in philosophy. Human rights activists used the work of Douglass with the purpose of defending the human rights, criticizing religion but also as a political context.

2.2 A Critical Reading of the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave

Frederick Douglass became renowned once he had published his autobiography in 1845. The narrative brought value and celebrity to him and to the Slave Narratives as well. The work was even considered as a “watershed” in the life of the writer because he narrated his long journey starting from the bottom with the fight against his former slave holder to learning writing and reading. These events which changed the life of Frederick Douglass persisted even after the publication of this autobiography. Due to this work, he established his own newspaper called North Star which was an anti-slavery newspaper founded in 1847. Frederick Douglass held also a remarkable status in the Republican Administration (Lee, 2009 p.1).

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass contained major themes which formed the story of a former slave describing his life from being a slave to becoming an intellectual person.

The text tackled an important issue which was the ignorance where it was used as a means to eternize slavery. Ignorance was a way to keep the slaves under

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the domination of the masters together with the physical cruelty. Slaves were not permitted to read and write. As a result they were isolated from the world because they were not aware about what happened outside the farms. Moreover, there was no communication between them and this was done on purpose to prevent any attempt of rebellion from the slaves. Literacy opened up the world for slaves allowing them to understand the history the ideas of justice and freedom¹.

After mastering reading and writing, Frederick Douglass became very aware about the reality of slavery as a devastating issue. He stated

It [Literacy] had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity (Douglass, p.35).

Masters prohibited slaves from learning and they wanted to spread ignorance because it was a real way to keep slaves in their pockets, calm and satisfied with their situation. Frederick Douglass succeeded to escape from the chains of slavery because he moved beyond the darkness to an enlightened world full of knowledge².

The narrative, also, showed up the resistance of Douglass which was demonstrated in his meeting with Edward Covey. The nonviolent resistance was decisive for him in acquiring manhood. Frederick Douglass had many qualities such as the patience, the courage and the endurance. Even when things and situations became very difficult for him and his fellow slaves, he had a noteworthy ability to hide and point his anger to the right side and the good way of resistance distinguished by maturity and wisdom³.

¹<http://www.gradesaver.com/narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-an-american-slave-written-by-himself/study-guide>

² <http://www.articlemyriad.com/analysis-narrative-life-frederick-douglass>

³ <http://www.shmoop.com/life-of-frederick-douglass.html>

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During his great battle with Covey, Frederick Douglass used his patience and held against the torture of his master. Eventually, this immovability weakened Covey and broke him into pieces and Douglass ended this fight as a winner. In his resistance, Douglass focused on nonviolence and patience. Even though he wanted to demonstrate that the only way to get rid of him is ending his life rather than beating him, Douglass was not an offensive person and his road to personality and mental maturity was never bricked with blood⁴.

Moreover, this narrative is more than just a tale about an escape from slavery of some accusations about the Southern system and how it dealt with servitude. It is more about how slavery made a man, the story of a young boy who became a big man. Through this journey of Frederick Douglass, there is a description of his path from a total ignorance to knowledge, from an oppressed slave to a free man, from zero to hero and especially from childhood to maturity (ibid) .

When he was a child, he linked his increasing comprehension of slavery with his own life. When he became a teenager and while he was between the hands of several slave-masters, he started to plan his pathway and made freedom as a main object. Through his autobiography, Douglass narrated with details how literacy widened his mind giving him the opportunity to know the harmful reality and nature of slavery. He also prepared his mind to be free and started a long journey with the purpose to flee from slavery and married after that, changing his name and his status as well. Through this noticeable autobiography, Douglass planned his coming of age, yet he put his work aside from the others of the same genre because the different hurdles he faced during his life⁵.

In his Narrative, Frederick Douglass wanted to deny the allegations of the whites about slaves in which they said that they could not be friends with each other which is not true. Douglass wrote about the great relationship between him and his

⁴ <http://www.gradesaver.com/narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-an-american-slave-written-by-himself/study-guide>

⁵ <http://www.articlemyriad.com/analysis-summary-narrative-life-frederick-douglass/>

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fellow slaves when they were at Freeland's Farm. He said that they could die for each other, they took advice from each other in every single issue and they loved each other. They pawned their fortunes and even their lives for each other and they did not quit each other in their attempts of escaping. They preferred to die rather than to be separated from each other⁶.

Douglass was a man who experienced the feeling of brotherhood and the life in a united community and this made slavery bearable. Friendship was decisive and significant for slaves because they lived the same situation of being separated from their own families with the purpose of dehumanizing them. The slaves gained emotional, mental and the physical support from their fellow friends (ibid).

Slavery as a system was very disgusting and detestable. It destroyed the fate of people and persecuted them physically and mentally demolishing the slave and the slave-master as well. The narrative allocated a space to this issue where Douglass described the horrible situation of the slaves in which they were deprived from food and clothes. Moreover, they were raped savagely and pimped out. Slaveholders did not let slaves marry the girls they wanted⁷.

Slaves were obliged to lie about their situation in which they said that they were happy and satisfied with their masters because they were afraid from being punished. Moreover slavery intoxicated the system of the society in the South making it a naughty one⁸.

2.3 Mythical Douglass; the Self-Made Man

The story of Frederick Douglass was riddled with several events that changed his life. Those events participated in forging his identity. Douglass started

⁶ <http://www.gradesaver.com/narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-an-american-slave-written-by-himself/study-guide>

⁷ <http://www.shmoop.com/life-of-frederick-douglass.html>

⁸ <http://www.gradesaver.com/narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-an-american-slave-written-by-himself/study-guide>

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his autobiography in an exemplary autobiographical style using a simple topical expression: “I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot County, Maryland” (Douglass, p.12). In this first sentence, Frederick Douglass identified himself and located the place where he was born (Lee, p.11). Professor and critic Robert S. Levine said that the opening chapter of the narrative did not contain anything about the heroic escalate of Douglass from bondage to freedom and that there is nothing about the representative leadership but instead there are avowals of confusion and disruption (Levine, 2009, p.32).

The first chapter as a whole is completely the contrary from how Douglass will identify himself afterwards. Moreover, it is different from the joint description of himself being “master of self-reliance” who was known by his hard work, sincerity and creativity. All this helped him escape from slavery to liberty and made him a very recognized abolitionist (ibid).

Levine said that this difference in the description of himself was maybe a result of the chains put on Douglass by white sponsors. The issue of slavery was used by Frederick Douglass as an indicator of self-reference during the rest of the autobiography. This use of slavery as an indicator of self-reference became joint in different slave narratives published after the narrative of Frederick Douglass. Nevertheless and at the end of his novel, Douglass came back to the typical types of the previous slave narratives elaborating on what William Lloyd Garrison penned about him in his introduction to the text of Frederick Douglass (Lee, 2009, p.13).

This reality made it clear that Garrison and other similar people somehow influenced and forced the first release of Douglass. The narrative of Frederick Douglass was recognized as a story of how he could become this person. Actually, Douglass was a well-spoken person and a well-dressed one and wrote his narrative with a very unique style that he innovated a kind of a certificate which explained how he became like that (ibid).

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Originally, Frederick's real name was Bailey. When he was in Baltimore, he took the name of "Stanley" and when he decided to go to New York, he called himself "Johnson". Yet and after reaching New Bedford, he found the change of his name necessary because as he said in his narrative, there were many Johnsons in New Bedford. Thus, it was difficult to differentiate between them (Lee, 2009, p.72).

When he was settled in New Bedford, Frederick Douglass and his wife took the citizenship in the North and became real residents who had all the rights of a Northern citizen. Mr. Johnson; an abolitionist who helped Douglass to obtain citizenship was given the excellence by Frederick Douglass to choose his modern name. However he said "He must not take from me my name of "Frederick". I must hold on to that, to preserve my sense of identity" (Douglass, p.96). Douglass was very attached to his own name which represented his identity.

The enthralled "Bailey" and the "liberate" Douglass are two different identities and "Frederick" represents the link between them. Frederick is the only thing that could connect the two identities and also was affirmed and held with the purpose of showing that Douglass had another identity as a slave which was considered as a property while he became a free man who has his own decisions, his own rights and also to show that the several changing events contributed a lot in creating his own character (Lee, 2009, p.75).

We can notice that there is a clear difference between the first chapters in which there was Frederick Bailey and the last chapters which witnessed the transformation to Frederick Douglass. One of Douglass' masters called A.C.C Thompson stated in his letter included in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass that he rejected his former slave because he was ordinary and uneducated and thus he was unable to write something like this narrative (Lee, 2009, p.85).

Actually, Douglass confirmed what was said by his former master and stated that "If anyone had told me, seven years ago, I should ever be able to write such a one, I should doubted as strongly as you now do" (Douglass, p.139). He also added

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“Frederick Douglass the freeman is a very different person from Frederick Bailey...” (ibid). Here, there is an affirmation that there is a huge difference between Bailey and Douglass and the several changes in his life played a big role in shaping his personality (Lee, 2009, p.87).

During the period in which there was the terrible fight against slavery, Frederick Douglass considered himself as a delegate for the political cause. The African American author tried to refute every single argument employed against slaves and it was clearly seen through several scenes of his narrative especially in the scene with the wife of Master Hugh, Sofia Auld who taught him the art of reading. She had never owned a slave before. Thus, she was very sympathetic with him (Lee, 2009, p.110). She started teaching him how to read until Master Hugh opposed. Master Auld said:

If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do. If you teach that nigger [...] how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would be forever unfit to him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy (Douglass, p.29).

Using this statement, Hugh Auld detailed some joint ideas concerning slaves and the widespread slave holding in the South over the 19th century. He had a justification about teaching Douglass reading. He said that his wife could not teach the slave how to read because the process of reading made Douglass unhappy. He wanted to say that slaves wanted to stay ignorant all their life (Lee, 2009, p.111) .

Douglass was sent to Baltimore in order to work for Master Auld again after an unsuccessful escape. He was sent as an apprentice by Hugh Auld to a shipbuilder named William Gardner. Douglass became a very useful and important worker at the dockyard after a short time. Yet, after a big fight with the other employees at the

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shipyard, Douglass needed a recovery and was sent again to work at the shipyard of Hugh Auld (Lee, 2009, p.69).

Douglass eventually succeeded to escape to the North. He noticed that he went from one bondage to another. Liberty was only symbolic in the North. He tried to recover his post as caulker. Yet, he faced a preconception of the white employees at the dockyard. Douglass prepared himself to do any kind of work since he discovered that his future was not in working as a caulker. Afterwards, he obtained a new job. He was really happy to master himself even if the work was very difficult and dirty as well. The self-possession by economic tools as a notion is shown here (ibid). He stated: "From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom" (Douglass, p.29). This quotation shows how Douglass was very glad that he will eventually work for himself without any master. He even considered this thing as a way to get his liberty.

The mythical aspects of Frederick Douglass were really shown in one event that affirmed these aspects. It was in the fight he had with Edward Covey, who was a renowned slave breaker. Douglass was treated badly when he was in Covey's house. Douglass considered Covey as the worst of his all masters (Lee, 2009, p.78).

After a short time, Mr. Covey attacked Douglass. This aggression led to an evil altercation between them and Douglass decided to fight back. Douglass presented this altercation as a showdown of biblical size. After being trapped by Covey, Frederick Douglass said:

Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased; but at this moment – from whence came the spirit I don't know – I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. He held on to me, and I to him. My resistance was so entirely unexpected, that

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Covey seemed taken all aback. He trembled like a leaf [...] (Douglass, p.50).

The victory over Mr. Covey led Douglass to feel confident and determined to become eventually free. The fact that he won against a man who broke his spirit left him inspired with self-confidence (Lee, 2009, p.79)

During this fight, it is interesting to see how Frederick Douglass pointed manhood, and how this sense of manliness was restored. There is an involvement that influenced the enslaved men and weakened them. Therefore, making them incapable to defend themselves and their families and make them also lower than their white masters. However, the victory of Douglass over Mr.Covey made him a real “man”who could protect himself and being able to make decisions about his own life (Lee, 2009, p.82).

2.4 The Use of Religion by Douglass

Both Slavery and the use of religion were addressed by Frederick Douglass as a justification of slavery. Douglass criticized the slaveholders of the South who used a side-track form of Christianity in order to vindicate the bondage of the others even though he used the language of the Bible and usually referenced stories and biblical figures in relation to several events which changed his life (Lee, 2009, p.94).

Moreover, at the end of the autobiography, Frederick Douglass has inserted an appendix in order to join his criticism and to light any misunderstanding of the readers about his views about Christianity (ibid).

If we observe his autobiography, there are different events in which Douglass mis-believes the way religion was used against him by slaveholders. Through this narrative, there is a kind of dual opposition between slaveholders who are of proper Christian faith versus“religious slave-masters” (Lee, 2009, p.103).

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When Douglass was living with Master Auld, he hoped that the attendances of Hugh Auld in the Methodist Camp Meetings would change him; lead him to redeem his slaves or partially make him nicer, friendlier and especially humanitarian. However, Douglass was frustrated in those aspects. He stated:

It neither made him more to be more humane to his slaves, nor to emancipate them. If it had any effect on his character, it made him more cruel and hateful in all his ways; for I believe him to have been a much worse man after his own depravity to shield and sustain him in his savage barbarity; but after his conversion, he found religious sanctions and support for his slaveholding cruelty (Douglass, p.40).

Through this quotation, we noticed the complete disappointment of Douglass about how Master Auld used religion to enslave people (ibid).

Frederick Douglass described in details in his narratives the way Master Auld prays every morning, day and night, and quickly became a tool in the pocket of the church supporting different evangelists. Douglass also talked about the slaves and how they were prohibited to learn anything about religion. Hugh Auld quoted from the scripture: “He that knoweth his master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Holy Bible – King James Version, Luke 12.47).

This quotation shows how Auld found several excuses from the bible in order to forbid slaves from learning religion and Douglass considered this as a bloody deed.

Furthermore, Douglass stated that Mr. Covey “was a professor of religion – a pious soul – a member and class leader in the Methodist church. All of this added weight to his reputation as a “nigger breaker” (Douglass, p.42). In this quotation, Douglass described the renowned slave breaker as a deeply religious person and how he was related to church.

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This kind of people like Mr. Covey and Hugh Auld used a wrong and false form of Christianity in order to permit the slaveholding. When describing Mr. Covey, Douglass used the language of the bible and called him “The snake” as an indication to the Devil. He was also described as a big betrayer (Lee, 2009, p.155).

Douglass also stated about religious masters: “I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me. For of all slaveholders with whom I met, the religious slaveholders are the worst” (Douglass, p.53). Here, Douglass attacked the hypocrisy of the religious slaveholders because it is impossible to be a true Christian and the same time possess slaves and destroy them.

Frederick Douglass accosted people who considered him as an adversary of religion in his appendix. In order to differentiate between those who pretended to be Christians, Douglass put up two oppositions. He made a difference Christianity as in the concept of the slaveholders in the United States and Christianity of the Christ where Douglass is a faithful follower (Lee, 2009, p.158).

Furthermore, Douglass mocked of the churchgoers of the South by making a parody of the Heavenly Union which is a hymn sung in several churches at that time and turned to emulate the clergies of the South (ibid).

In order to gain the access to the franchise of the colonizers, the colonized subject often turned to imitation. Yet, it was not constantly the case because imitation is not far from irony (Ashcroft & Griffiths, 2001, p.136).

Douglass explained his opinion on religion with his appendix. He also tried to deny any accusation for being blasphemous. Simultaneously, it allowed him to create the delusion that bondage is unproblematic and also to detail more on how slaveholders used religion to justify slavery (Lee, 2009, p.181).

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2.5 Truthfulness and the Design in Douglass' Narrative

There are many events which exploded the narrative of Frederick Douglass. When demonstrating different life changing events, it looked like Douglass relied just on tale-bearings and hearsay rather than real events. We take the example of his tale on Demby's death. First of all, Demby was a slave held by Colonel Lloyd and overlooked by Mr. Austin Gore, a harsh and sadistic man. Demby's death was depicted in details. Demby was lashed by Mr. Gore. After that, Demby left to a streamlet in order to calm his burns and refused to appear (Lee, 2009, p.258).

Mr.Gore replied by saying that he will give Demby three calls and after that he will shoot. Demby did not answer, so, Mr.Gore elevated his musket and killed the slave. Thereafter, Douglass narrated that Mr.Gore had explained what he did to Colonel Lloyd. Douglass gave an account about the defense of Mr. Gore and the response of Colonel Lloyd. When this event occurred, Douglass was 5 years old. So, it is somehow bizarre that he remembered the entire story with details (Lee, 2009, p.259).

Moreover, there is another example when he narrated how his aunt was beaten by the master. He gave his account about this event using quotations. Taking his age into consideration, it is strange that Douglass could recount this event perfectly.

Those events can be connected with the theory of trauma. A tale of trauma, in the example of the one mentioned above, has a self-representation in the autobiography and also opposite requirements with the authority. Taking these particular events as a case, it seems that there is a plan to portray them in a frank fashion with the purpose of evoking the malice towards slavery as a whole (Lee, 2009, p.266).

Seeing the age of Frederick Douglass when he witnessed those events, they should have been severely horrific for him. In order to know what he has been through, we should scrutinize it within history. It is improbable that Douglass would

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assist suchlike events. Adding similar events would prove worthy for the readership because they would help those readers to clearly understand how life was during slavery and how slaves suffered because of the bondage (ibid).

Frederick Douglass may have said that he had assisted those events although there is a real proof that demonstrates the opposite. Nevertheless, it does not mean that those events are not real. Many slaves had terrible similar incidents. Douglass may have heard anecdotes like this from other slaves and may even have experienced some of them when he was a child. However, he could not retell those events in their authentic shape because of their dreadful nature and his age as well (Gilmore, 2001, p.19).

2.6. The Impact of Douglass' Narrative on the American Society Nowadays

As a Civil Rights leader, Douglass defended for the equality of rights and the opportunities of his fellow black Americans. In order to transmit his important message, he published the “The North Star” and “Frederick Douglass” Paper. Douglass understood how particular he was. In his speeches and writings, he used symbolism whenever he saw the occasion against the dehumanization of the human race and the bondage as well.

The most significant heritage of Frederick Douglass was the utilization of his words with the purpose to struggle for the rights and the liberty of the black Americans. He used his writing skills and elocution during his life in order to convey his wish to liberate the African American slaves which led afterwards to the Emancipation Proclamation established by Abraham Lincoln.

Frederick Douglass influenced his fellow African American citizens with his life, his principles and his heroism when he was fighting against the issue of

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slavery. Many Black American leaders such as Malcolm X or Martin Luther King Jr used the words of Douglass to express and show their people's concerns in order to sail with the country and conduct it to safety and peace.

Literature does not have an impact that is limited in the era that is produced in. Nevertheless, it can have a larger effect on the coming generations, hundreds of years later in the example of music, cinema and literature.

2.6.1. Hip Hop and Rap Music

Rap Music and Slave Narratives have something in common. They both rose directly from difficult moments of social persecution in the American history and they have an efficient role which is to bring consciousness to socio-political situations with the purpose of making a radical change; a kind of revolution in the society (Hamera, 2006, p.77).

Slavery was the impulse that led the American citizens to create a cultural assistance taking the shape of music and literature in order to fight against the wrongful situations. The issue of slavery was quite painful to the African American culture and identity as well. Even if Slavery was exercised hundreds of years before the introduction of white Americans in the Southern pre-war, this was the first example of slavery which distinguished a category of people as “sub-human” (ibid).

Hip Hop became a very communal genre of music nowadays. It is quite similar to Slave Narratives in different aspects such as the use of symbolism and coded metaphors. Symbolism is very essential in spirituals, whereas the purpose of metaphors is to make an emotional link with the persons who listen. Moreover, Hip Hop culture and slaves share an identical mind-set (Eyerman, 2004, p.317).

Hip Hop and Rap music from the latest decades indicated slavery as well as the emancipation with the purpose of making people conscious about the similarities in the American society between the past and the present. Slavery contributed in the creation and the advancement of Rap music.

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Its influence is demonstrated in different features such as the lyrics of the songs, emotions and rhythm and of course the call and response. We can see the parallel to the method of the treatment of African Americans in the society today through the references to bondage and the outrageous racism of the past (Toure, 2013, p.58).

Rap songs have something in common which is their lyrical signs to slavery, yet in various styles. By comparing slavery and the current problems of society that affect the American society, Rap artists want to remind people that maybe slavery disappeared but racism caused by this issue still exists with its different aspects (ibid).

Just as Frederick Douglass' renowned narrative, Rap Music spread in the United States. It progressed in social media pushed the genre into the field of public, permitting the Rap artists to entice the followers using their appearance to declaim powerful affairs. Frederick Douglass dissuaded the power of the language and confirmed that it has the ability of changing society once it was used in a correct way. He used speech and the writing in order to express his own culture and to edify people with the purpose of completely changing the society (Alim, 2009, p.52).

Douglass said also that by using art in order to affect individuals through performance, writing and images, only the performers have the strength to shape differently their identities. This is clearly seen in the contemporary Rap artists and their use of music in order to create new identities with the purpose of transmitting socio-political and cultural messages (ibid).

Moreover, other effects are shown in different American states in which racism is widespread there. According to a report done by Brian Sluts and John Logan at Florida State University, racial discrimination is still elevated in the nation. We can say that white people still think that they are better than the blacks; which means that they did not abandon the idea of the supremacy of the whites.

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Some states are considered as the most segregated cities of the country including Birmingham (Alabama), Boston in which black people there are referred to as "colored" people⁹.

Phoenix is well-known with its racist citizens. Los Angeles is also included because it has the problem of immigrants, finally, New York which is popular with its segregated areas (ibid).

2.6.2. Cinema

The cinematic world has a long history with slavery. Movies are considered as a current impact of this phenomenon. There is a long list of films featuring slavery issue with a common aim which is to demonstrate its negative aspects. Among the notable movies about slavery there is 12 Years a slave released in 2013 and based on a true story of Solomon Northup who was a free black man; kidnapped and found himself enslaved for 12 years¹⁰.

The 2012 movie "Django Unchained" which talked about a slave bought by a German dentist who decided to give the slave his freedom in exchange of helping him in tracing a dangerous outlaw group is another example of films broadcasting and showing the issue of slavery.

Uncle's Tom Cabin is considered among the most touching works. It was an adaptation of a novel with the same name. The movie focused on the story of the enslaved black man called Uncle Tom in which he suffered a lot from the evils of slavery. The story of the other characters revolves around the protagonist (ibid).

2.6.3. African American Literature

African American Literature became really popular nowadays and also accepted as a legal genre of American Literature. Contemporary Black American

⁹<http://deadspin.com/the-most-racist-cities-in-america>

¹⁰<http://atlantablackstar.com/2014/09/07/8-memorable-films-slavery-got-right-got-wrong/>

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writers; men and women, still denounce the treatment of blacks in the society taking Frederick Douglass' work as a starting point; as a model to be followed.

Toni Morrison was considered as one of the leading African American Writers of the twentieth century. The writer was influenced by Frederick Douglass and his narrative. In most of her novels, she tackled the same issues discussed by Douglass. In her well-known novel entitled *Beloved*, she described the life of a slave who took her liberty. Nevertheless, she killed her daughter in order to save her from the life of a slave. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988 (Gilyard, Wardi, 2004, p.42).

The novelist and Poet Alice Walker demonstrated the influence of Douglass life and works on her writings. The author won several awards for the novels and essays she wrote. In her novel *The Color Purple*, she tackled the issue of the abuse of women through the story of Celie who was abused by her stepfather and physically by her husband afterwards. The novel was adapted later into a movie by Steven Spielberg (ibid).

Civil Rights activist and writer James Baldwin wrote an interesting semi-autobiographical novel named *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. The main focus of the story was on racism. It was about a family who moved to Harlem and suffered from being in the second class. The novel showed the robust link to the family and the church as well. Religion and family were among the main issues tackled by Fredrick Douglass in his famous narratives which revealed his large effect on James Baldwin¹¹.

The last decade witnessed an increase in a new genre called "street literature". Among the young writers of the genre there is the playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins who was completely influenced by Frederick Douglass. In most of his plays, he spotlights the racial issues in the current American society saying that

¹¹http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2010/10/five_young_black_writers_you_should_be_reading_now.html

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the blackface is still strange for people just like most things having to do with guilt, shame and American history.

2.7 Conclusion

In this second chapter the focus was on a critical reading of the well known autobiography of Frederick Douglass entitled *Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, written by himself*; starting with the major themes of the autobiography tackled by the author in the example of ignorance and the importance of friendship. We also dived into his own identity with the contribution of the several life changing in the creation of his character.

After that, we moved to religion as a very important issue that was tackled by Frederick Douglass. Then, we spoke about the truthfulness of the narrative and we have finished with the impact of his work on the American society today.

The aim of this chapter was not only to get more acquainted with Douglass' Narrative, but also to highlight its influence on Douglass' fellow black American citizens and how his attitudes contributed in the construction of a new United States of America based on equality between people.

General Conclusion

Slavery as shown above was a scandalous phenomenon which influenced the entire world and particularly the United States. One cannot define the term slavery without distinguishing some essential features and conditions. Going back to history, Slavery had three leading characteristics which are violence, the loss of free will and the economic profiteering. Using violence, the master assures the total control and the domination over the slave. The integration of those aspects gives the definition of the term “slavery”.

In this research, we have focused on the issue of slavery in America starting from its origins and exactly in 1619 when Africans were brought and exchanged with food. In the 17th century, the British colonizers counted on indentured servants who are persons brought to America and placed under contract to work for a specific period and then they obtained their liberty. Usually, those servants were convicts, paupers or victims of political persecution. The number of Africans increased in America and the need of black workers became fundamental. As a consequence, the slave-masters held the Africans against their wish and forced them to do what they wanted. This was called “slavery”.

The 18th century witnessed the first slave rebellion called The Stono River Rebellion in 1739 which came after the Legal Code which was established to regulate slavery. The affair of slavery reached the summit after a disagreement between the Southerners and the delegates of the Constitutional Convention and with the invention of the Cotton Gin in 1794, the conflicts between the North and the South rose. The regulation of slavery created a new altercation over the free and slave states. The problems between the two sides grew with the issue of taxes and the statue of slavery in the new territories obtained by the United States. All this led the nation to enter into a Civil War which lasted four years.

General Conclusion

At the same time, The South was in trouble because some abolitionists led by John Brown organized a rebellion against Southern masters. This revolt was unsuccessful and John Brown was killed. However, it inflamed the emotion of people. Even some Southern states wanted to break away from the country. Fortunately for the Americans, Abraham Lincoln was elected as a president and soon after he came up with the Emancipation Proclamation which was like a lifeline for the nation. It declared all the slaves free and completely abolished bondage in the United States.

Literature of the African American people began once they reached America in 1619. The genre witnessed an evolution and tackled different important issues especially slavery and racism.

Slave Narratives are personal testimonies on what was probably the first huge crime against humanity in modern scale in world history, at least in the Western world. Paradoxically, these individual testimonies on this collective experience of suffering and resistance were one of the most popular genres in the nineteenth century in the United States, and the African American Literature nowadays is based on this amount of autobiographical stories. Slave narratives were very important because they showed to the readers slaves' lives during that period.

The genre had a unique particularity. The author could write his own experiences or he could dictate them to another one who would write them. The blacks took those accounts as a challenge because they wanted to prove their humanity and they could write credibly. Slave Narratives had its icons who suffered from the terror of capture and the brutality of slavery such as Harriet Jacobs, William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass who was our focus in the second chapter.

General Conclusion

Frederick Douglass was one of the greatest abolitionist voices of America. Separated very young from his mother who was a slave, and without knowing his father who was a white man, he first worked as a domestic slave, and then in the fields and on a shipyard in Maryland. In 1845, and when he was twenty-seven, Frederick Douglass, published one of the most powerful stories against slavery entitled *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. He recounted his childhood in the plantation, the separation of families, pervasive violence, and his departure to the city and the revelation that put him on the path of freedom. In a scathing pen, he attacked the inhumanity of the slave system and the barbarity of the masters.

In his autobiography, Douglass tackled different themes such as the coming of age, ignorance, perversity of slavery and the resistance. Those issues instituted the basis of this narrative. Frederick Douglass recounted all the life changing events which contributed in creating his own identity and his personality as well. The influence of William Lloyd Garrison was really shown in the autobiography. Douglass demonstrated his attachment with his own name; he could not change it because he represented his identity. Moreover, the writer presented to the readership his two identities. The first is that of the enslaved person and the second of the liberated one.

Furthermore, Douglass used the language of the bible in his narrative; he attacked the slave-masters who used religion to justify their crime on humanity. He also criticised them because they prevented the slaves from learning anything about religion using some parts from the bible. They exploited religion in bad purposes and he described them as hypocrites.

The aim of this research was to see the impact of Slavery and Slave Narratives represented by the autobiography of Frederick Douglass on the American Society.

The results could be epitomized in few key points which are music, racist cities, cinema, and literature.

Slavery and slave narratives contributed a lot in the African American music and especially Rap where the artists tried to compare the current situations lived by the

blacks and the era of slavery as well as their attempts to revolt and to make a radical change in the society.

There are many similarities between Rap music and Slave Narratives in the example of coded metaphors and symbolism used in the songs. Both Rap music and Slave Narratives came as a result of slavery issues and spread into the world using the power of language to influence people.

Racist cities still exist in the United States of America in which white people still consider themselves as superior to blacks such as in New York, Birmingham (Alabama) and Phoenix.

The impact of slavery embodied in the seventh art where there are many notable movies that narrate slavery and how it destroyed people. For instance, *12 Years a Slave* which won an Oscar, as well as *Django Unchained* or *A Woman Called Moses*. These film-adaptations have a strong impact on the audience.

African American Literature developed because of slavery and Douglass' narrative. Contemporary black American writers were influenced by Fredrick Douglass and his words. So, they tried to tackle the same issues discussed by Douglass before in order to rebel against a racist society and to make a radical change through the art of literature.

We cannot deny that slavery has affected American culture today. The disagreement remains on the definition of this effect and how to address this issue. Although 150 years may seem long, America is a young continent and only time will mark the change, as it has done historically. All Americans should continue to discuss and to work together towards a common future liberated from the traces of Slavery embodied in racism.

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