

HOUSES OF BONDAGE, LOOPHOLES OF RETREAT

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2000)
(English)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

**TITLE: Houses of Bondage, Loopholes of Retreat: Space and Place in Four African
American Slave Narratives.**

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 294

**HOUSES OF BONDAGE, LOOPHOLES OF RETREAT:
SPACE AND PLACE IN FOUR AFRICAN AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVES**

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between space and the recognition of African American subjectivity in four African American slave narratives: Frederick Douglass's Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845) and My Bondage and My Freedom (1855); Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861); and Elizabeth Keckley's Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House (1868).

Influenced by geographer Edward Soja's examination of social space, I argue that the socio-economic relationship between slaveowners and slaves produced slave space. The area where slaves lived and worked, it was concrete evidence of the slave's inferior, non-subject status. Slaves, however, asserted their subjectivity by appropriating, shaping, and escaping the spaces to which they were confined. The slaves' shaping of space included the construction of a "homeplace," a domestic space where slaves could recognize each others' subjectivity. In Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Douglass documented his escape from Southern slave space to Northern free space, where he hoped to be defined as a subject rather than an object. In My Bondage and My Freedom, however, this recognition is still to be striven for: it was only experienced in Douglass's grandmother's homeplace.

As a man, Douglass sought access to, and recognition in, public spaces. Harriet

Jacobs, however, defends the African American woman's right to occupy a domestic space maintained by her husband, rather than her master. Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl documents the violation of the slaves' homeplace, key evidence of their non-subject status.

Finally, I examine Elizabeth Keckley's post-Civil War narrative, arguing that the seamstress saw her access to the White House as evidence that newly emancipated African Americans would be recognized as subjects in the newly reconstituted republic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to thesis supervisor Dr. D. Goellnicht, whose prompt and insightful comments have proved invaluable. Thanks also to committee members, Dr. M. O'Connor and Dr. J. Adamson for their indispensable advice and encouragement.

Thanks also go to Anne Milne and Robin Lucy, who, though in the midst of their own research, suggested sources which proved to be invaluable.

I would also like to thank Douglass and Ida Morton for their encouragement and support.

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ONE

Introduction

In 1838 a fugitive slave who was to become known as Frederick Douglass made a secret journey from Baltimore to New York. The journey, which I shall describe in my next chapter, was achieved with such stealth because it was particularly perilous: Douglass could not leave Maryland, much less Baltimore, without the permission of his master. Thus, the state of his birth was also the space of his confinement; his residence was a location to which he was legally bound, a space from which he had to escape.

What is interesting here is that Douglass achieved a fundamental change in status -- from chattel to man, from bond to free -- by moving from one space to another. The space he occupied defined him. Douglass's occupation of free soil did not dissolve the legal tie which bound him to his owner: he was in danger of capture and re-enslavement until his manumission in 1846. Just as importantly, it did not grant him the social and legal equality which he desired -- white Northerners, like their Southern counterparts, still deemed him inferior. Douglass could, however, live as a free man under an assumed name, claiming his wages, his wife, and his children as his own for the first time. While Douglass's "ownership" of his family suggests that his wife and children remained unfree in spite of their non-slave status, Douglass does not acknowledge any such contradiction. Legally recognized as the head of the domestic space he and his family occupied, he was

finally, despite the North's legal and social restrictions, occupying the space reserved for free men.¹

It is this connection between status and space -- and the slaves' self-documented efforts to change, or at least ameliorate, the former by manipulating the latter -- which forms the basis for this thesis. As John Michael Vlach has noted in his study of plantation architecture, the ordering of the slaveholders' large farms and larger plantations, still discernable in photographs taken more than half a century later, reflected the slaveowners' desire to "mark their dominance over nature and other men" through spaces designed to establish, reinforce and maintain "a strict, heirarchical order" (1-5). Slaves lived and worked in spaces which emphasized their inferior status and permitted their owners to scrutinize and control them. Faced with such spatial organization and "denied the time and resources needed to design and build as they might have wanted, [slaves] simply appropriated, as marginalized people often do, the environments to which they were assigned" (16). For example, while slave spaces such as the plantation kitchen were ostensibly under the slaveowner's surveillance, slave women could, and did, limit their mistresses' access to such spaces. Indeed, when they could, slaves went beyond appropriation to actively shape their environments, creating gathering places of their own.

¹ A child followed the condition of his or her mother, making the offspring of an enslaved woman the property of her master, rather than her husband. Although Douglass married a free woman, he himself could be sold away from his family: the marital ties which bound a free man's family to him were not legally recognized in the slave's case (Genovese 475-481). I shall explore Douglass's efforts to fill the patriarchal role of father and husband in my third chapter.

With these ideas in mind, I shall examine four slave narratives: Frederick Douglass's Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself (1845) and the later My Bondage and My Freedom (1855), Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself (1861), and Elizabeth Keckley's Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House (1868). Although these narratives represent neither the experiences of all slaves nor the genre as a whole, they do show how three former slaves chose to depict the spaces they inhabited.

Of the three autobiographers I shall examine, Douglass is the most well known. A self-educated slave who worked as ships' caulker and farm labourer, he escaped from his Maryland master in 1838. By 1845, Douglass had become a prominent lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. The articulate ex-slave countered rumours that he was an imposter by revealing his birthplace, his given name and the name of his master in Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Douglass continued lecturing and, by 1855, became the editor of his own newspaper. By this time, he had also broken with the American Anti-Slavery Society and its president, William Lloyd Garrison. My Bondage and My Freedom, Douglass's second autobiography, reflects both the influence of the Constitutional reinterpretation which prompted this break and Douglass's call for an end to the racial discrimination which plagued the "free" North.

Although Harriet Jacobs was not as well-known to her contemporaries as Frederick Douglass, she too was an anti-slavery activist and former slave who was friends with Douglass and other abolitionists such as Isaac and Amy Post and L. Maria Child.

Born in Edenton, North Carolina, Jacobs was a house slave who spent nearly seven years in the tiny attic of her free grandmother's home in order to avoid being sexually exploited by her master. She escaped, finally, in 1842 and supported herself and her children as a nursemaid in the home of writer Nathaniel P. Willis.

While Douglass and Jacobs are very well-known to present day students of American literature, Elizabeth Keckley is not. Because of the role she played as dress designer/seamstress for Abraham Lincoln's wife, however, her autobiography has never quite disappeared from view: her book is one of the few sources of first-hand information Lincoln biographers have about the Lincolns' family life during the time they occupied the White House. Although the details Keckley reveals are not particularly scandalous, her book was a sensation when it appeared in 1868. At that time, reviewers largely focussed on Keckley's role in the scandal which broke when Lincoln's widow, beset by financial anxieties, attempted to sell some of her cast-off finery. Born in Virginia, Keckley, like Jacobs, was a house slave who was subjected to sexual exploitation. Keckley managed to purchase herself and her son in 1860. Thereafter, she organized and participated in relief efforts for former slaves while simultaneously running a thriving dressmaking business. Sewing for the President's wife and other members of the Washington élite, Keckley had access to the homes of the era's major political figures.

In this thesis I shall explore how Douglass, Jacobs and Keckley asserted their humanity by alternately appropriating, redefining, and finally escaping the spaces their masters used to confine, define and control them. Even when Douglass, Jacobs and

Keckley reached the "free space" of the north, however, they continued to struggle to find spaces in which they were recognized as subjects, rather than objects. But while Douglass and Jacobs struggled to occupy spaces in which their subjectivity was recognized, they also conformed to traditional spatial divisions which defined men and women. This acceptance, and indeed promotion, of these traditionally gendered spaces can be seen as self-limiting, since nineteenth-century women were largely confined to the home by legal and social constraints. For a former slave such as Harriet Jacobs, however, the occupation of such a confined space was yet another way of indicating her humanity, since it served to confirm a womanhood which racism held in question. Although Elizabeth Keckley's experiences as a free African American woman outside of her own domestic space initially suggests that she rejected these limitations, her position as nurse and dressmaker did not cause her to venture too far away from the spaces traditionally occupied by a woman of her status. My analysis of the relationship between status and space in these texts will form a significant addition to the contemporary criticism of slave narratives.

As I shall note later, nineteenth-century slave narratives were subjected to rigorous authentication: most, if not all, were prefaced with the testimony of a white guarantor, who assured the reader that the story was true. In spite of nineteenth-century efforts to authenticate these records, however, twentieth-century scholars have been slow to recognize the narratives' historical importance. Marion Wilson Starling's 1946 doctoral dissertation "The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History" was one of the first modern studies of the subject. Even after Starling completed her doctoral dissertation,

however, well known historian Kenneth Stampp declared, in 1956, that there were "few reliable records of what went on in the minds of slaves." As John Blassingame and Charles Davis have noted in their prefatory remarks to Starling's now published work, the narratives were previously ignored because they were thought to be the work of abolitionist propagandists (Starling x). While Starling's work set an acknowledged precedent, her thesis was not published until 1980.

The lack of attention given to Starling's work is indicative of attitudes to slave narratives during the period. Although the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Projects Administration interviewed approximately two thousand surviving ex-slaves during the Depression, the interviews were not systematically published in an unedited form until George P. Rawick published The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography in 1972.² By this time, the importance of slave narratives as historical documents had been recognized: Blassingame's The Slave Community (1972) and Eugene Genovese's Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (1972) both rely extensively upon them in order to reconstruct the daily lives of American slaves. Finally, in 1985, Deborah Gray White's Ar'n't I A Woman?, a study of the lives of female slaves in the plantation South, was published. White's work explored an important area which, until then, had been insufficiently examined.

At the same time, the narratives were being increasingly studied as part of the

² The total number of slave narratives, according to Marion Wilson Starling, is approximately six thousand (xviii).

African-American literary tradition. Books such as Sidonie Smith's Where I'm Bound: Patterns of Slavery and Freedom in Black American Autobiography (1974) and Stephen Butterfield's Black Autobiography in America (1974), trace thematic connections between slave narratives and twentieth-century African American autobiographies. Smith traces patterns of flight, conversion, definitions of manhood and womanhood, and the autobiographer's attempts to deal with loss and transcend the discriminatory ties which have historically bound African Americans. Butterfield writes that the "[t]he concrete diction, ironic humor, understatement, polemics and epithet that we recognize in contemporary black essayists all appear first in the slave narrative" (32). Indeed, slave narratives have influenced all genres of African American literature, evidence that African American writers, like the authors of slave narratives themselves, "read each other's texts and seize upon topoi and tropes to revise in their own texts" (Gates The Signifying Monkey 128). Studies of African American literature, including Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory (1984), Hazel Carby's Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist (1987), Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism (1988), Frances Smith Foster's Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women (1993), and many other studies begin by examining slave narratives. The collection The Slave's Narrative (1985), edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Charles T. Davis, includes the contemporary reviews of individual narratives and essays on slave narratives as history and as literature. Studies of African

American slave narratives as literature include Frances Smith Foster's Witnessing Slavery (1979) and William Andrews' landmark To Tell a Free Story (1986). The latter, quoted below, is a detailed examination of African American autobiographical writings written between 1760 and 1865.

Much of the literary criticism of African American slave narratives has focussed on the role of literacy, the texts' status as autobiography, and the authors' control over the text and relationship to the reading audience. The focus on literacy is hardly surprising, given the fact that the narratives grew out of an overwhelming need to plead for the freedom of enslaved Africans and to prove, by the very act of writing, that Africans were human beings. As Gates writes:

Anglo-African writing arose as a response to allegations of its absence, and claims that the African *could* not ever master the arts and sciences. Black people . . . responded to these profoundly serious allegations about their "nature" as directly as they could: they wrote books. . . . The narrated, descriptive 'eye' was put into service as a literary form to posit both the individual 'I' of the black author, as well as the collective 'I' of the race. Text created author, and black authors, it was hoped would create, or recreate, the image of the race in European discourse ("The Voice in the Text" 207-208).

Gates argues that after Descartes, "reason was privileged or valorized, over all other human characteristics" (Signifying Monkey 129). Writing was the ultimate proof of reason and, therefore, of one's humanity. For this reason, slaves who wished to plead their people's case found the mastery of letters indispensable. Indeed, William L. Andrews, who sets the date of the genre's appearance at 1760, writes that, for the first fifty years the

slave narrative's aim was to assert the humanity of this collective, African-American "I".³ By writing, African Americans attempted to prove "that the slave was, as the inscription of a famous anti-slavery medallion put it, 'a man and a brother' to whites, especially to the reader of slave narratives" (To Tell a Free Story 1).

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has made a significant critical analysis of the early connections between humanity and literacy. In his essay "The Trope of the Talking Book," Gates traces the repeated revision of one image -- the talking book -- through five early narratives as each narrator, in turn, attempts to come to terms with what Gates elsewhere calls the "deafening discursive silence which an enlightened Europe cited as proof of the absence of the African's humanity" ("The Voice in the Text" 208). The trope of the talking book represents "the paradox of representing, of containing somehow, the oral within the written" at a point when "black people could become speaking subjects only by inscribing their voices in the written word," thus moving from an oral culture to a written one (Gates, The Signifying Monkey 131-130). In Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's 1770

³ Marion Wilson Starling asserts that the first slave narrative was Adam Negro's Tryall (1703), a record of a legal dispute between the slave Adam and his master, John Saffin of Boston Massachusetts. Having promised Adam his freedom after seven years of service, Saffin attempted to rescind it. The lower court decision in Saffin's favour was overturned on appeal. Since Adam's narrative is actually testimony in a legal dispute, it may be argued that the first slave narrative was Briton Hammon's A narrative of the uncommon sufferings, and surprising deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro man, -- servant to General Winslow, of Marshfield, in New-England; who returned to Boston, after having been absent almost thirteen years (1760). Since none of the trial documents "[emanate] from the consciousness of the black man himself," William Andrews argues that the latter text is actually the first narrative delivered by a slave (To Tell a Free Story 19).

narrative, the Dutch Bible or prayer book which "speaks" to his European master, remains silent when the slave puts his ear to it. "This desire for recognition of his self in the text of Western letters motivates Gronniosaw's creation of a text. . . . The text refuses to speak to Gronniosaw, so some forty-five years later Gronniosaw writes a text that speaks his face into existence among the authors and texts of the Western tradition" (137-38). In the 1785 captivity narrative of John Marrant, however, the African American preacher, captured by the Cherokee, himself possesses and "speaks to" the text, which his non-Christian captors find inaccessible. Marrant thus turns Gronniosaw's trope on its head -- the book "speaks" to Marrant because its "speech" is predicated, not on whiteness, but on Marrant's Christianity.

The image turns up again in the narratives of Ottobah Cugoano (1787), Olaudah Equiano (1789) and John Jea (1811). This recurrence suggest that Anglo-African writers were responding to each other's narratives. Indeed, Cugoano mentions Gronniosaw and Marrant in his text, while Equiano is known to have been Cugoano's friend. By the time these later texts appeared, literacy had become associated with freedom. In representing the wonderment with which his former self viewed his reading master, for example, Equiano shows his progress from slave/object to free man/subject. "When Equiano, the object, attempts to speak to the book, there follows only the deafening silence that obtains between two lifeless objects. Only a subject can speak. . . . Through the act of writing alone, Equiano announces and preserves his newly found status as a subject" (Gates, The Signifying Monkey 157). The illiterate John Jea, who has been told he may become free if

he is able to read, is taught to "read" a chapter of the Bible by an angel, a miracle which allows him to gain his freedom.

Although the trope of the "talking book" disappears after Jea's narrative, the association of literacy with freedom, which was the formal declaration of one's subjectivity, persisted. In Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845) Douglass's master forbids his wife to teach the slave to read: "if you teach that nigger. . .how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave" (274). In Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) Harriet Jacobs manages, while still in the South and hiding from her master, to depict herself, in letters she knows her master will read, as a free woman who has already escaped North. The letters are convincing enough to allow Jacobs to escape from her hiding place. Her literacy thus enables her to gain her freedom.

If the narratives were part of the slaves' efforts to prove their humanity, they also became powerful tools to be used in the call for the abolition of slavery. In keeping with the narratives' chief rhetorical aims, examinations of these texts have also focussed on the slave narrator's relationship to his or her audience, the increasingly sophisticated devices narrators have used in order to convince that audience, and the conditions -- including literacy, authentication and authorial control -- surrounding the narratives' production. My argument, therefore, significantly departs from previous criticism. In order to show that this is so, however, I must first explore both the general contours of the genre and the criticism written about it.

While early narrators attempted to prove both personal and collective humanity,

they also needed to demonstrate that the African American was, "despite all prejudice and propaganda, a truth-teller, a reliable transcriber of the experience and character of black folk" (Andrews, To Tell A Free Story 1). Although the narratives written by African Americans include the "captivity narrative" of Briton Hammond and the spiritual narratives of Jarena Lee, Julia Foote and others, the vast majority were written by former or fugitive slaves to promote the cause of abolition. White readers commonly read slave narratives in order to obtain an understanding of slavery, rather than out of interest in one particular slave. For this reason, the ex-slave's story had to be of undoubted veracity. At the same time, the narrator's veracity *was* inevitably doubted: as William Andrews has pointed out, most whites, including many abolitionists, believed that African Americans, though arguably human, were inferior beings given to falsehood and theft (2-5). It was for this reason, critic James Olney writes, that former slaves told or wrote episodic narratives, in which the effort to creatively shape events -- an effort which could seem suspiciously close to falsehood -- was noticeably absent. Instead, ex-slaves narrated plots which were remarkably similar: Olney lists twelve recurring plot conventions, including descriptions of punishment by cruel masters, mistresses or overseers, barriers against literacy, accounts of slave auctions and family separations, escape attempts, and descriptions of the slaves' work, food and clothing. The narrative was inevitably prefaced by an introduction written by a white (and therefore "reliable") editor, publisher or other supporter, who assured the audience of the ex-slave's veracity.

It is the slave narratives' lack of creative shaping, or *poiesis*, which has caused

James Olney to declare that most slave narratives, though autobiographical, are not technically autobiographies. Olney defines autobiography as "a recollective/narrative act in which the writer . . . looks back over the events of that life and recounts them in such a way as to show how that past history has led to this present state of being" (149). In order to do this, the autobiographer cannot be "a neutral and passive recorder but rather a creative and active shaper" (149). While the autobiographer's memory does not create events which never occurred, it "creates the *significance* of events in discovering the pattern into which those events fall," thereby "[constructing] significant wholes out of scattered events" (150). The constraints imposed upon the ex-slave narrator, however, result in a "nearly total lack of any 'configurational dimension,' and the virtual absence of any reference to memory or any sense that memory does anything but make the past facts and events of slavery immediately present to the writer and his reader" (150). Olney contends that only a few narrators -- most notably Frederick Douglass -- managed to consciously shape their material, thus writing fully fledged autobiographies.

In his much more extensive examination of narratives written by ex-slaves, however, William L. Andrews writes that the earlier self-effacing style of slave narratives later gave way to a bolder one as black narrators defiantly drew attention to "those aspects of the self outside the margins of the normal, the acceptable, and defineable, as perceived by the dominant culture" (To Tell a Free Story 1-2). While earlier narrators had tried to win over sceptical audiences by appearing to conform to that audience's moral norm, later narrators challenged the reader's received moral code. Why, wrote Douglass in My

Bondage and My Freedom (1855) for example, should the slave, whose labour and very person have been stolen by his master, be censured for stealing food? As a slave, he was merely protecting his master's investment; as a labourer, he was merely extracting his rightful payment from a recalcitrant employer.

In an influential, and often reprinted chapter in Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative (1979), Robert B. Stepto maps out the slave narrative's increasing sophistication and the authors' degree of control over his or her narrative by examining the narrative strategies linked to the inevitable need to authenticate the ex-slave's tale. Stepto writes that the narratives present three recognizable phases of narration. In "Basic Narrative (a)" or the "Eclectic Narrative," authenticating devices (letters, introductions and other documents) are appended to the narrative. The narrative which may be the most elaborately authenticated in this way is Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave (1849). The narrative is prefaced by a plethora of material, including an introduction by its publisher, who assures the reader of Bibb's literacy, averring that "[m]any of the closing pages of [the narrative] were written by Mr. Bibb in my office" (Bibb 54). Added to this testimony is the favourable, signed report written by members of a committee formed by the Detroit Liberty Association in order to investigate Bibb's story; extracts from testimony obtained by the committee in the form of six letters; including one from the son of Bibb's former master; the publisher's brief explication of the points the letters establish; a signed letter of endorsement from the Detroit Liberty Association and the signed recommendation of a Michigan judge. In spite of the fact that

Bibb wrote his own narrative, "the segregation of Bibb's 'Author's Preface' from the introductory compendium of documents is, even more than his silence within the compendium, indicative of how the former slaves' voice was kept muted and distant while the nation debated the questions of slavery and the Negro's humanity" (Stepto, Behind the Veil 9).

In more sophisticated, "integrated" narratives, authenticating documents become part of the narrative. In Solomon Northrup's Twelve Years a Slave (1854), for example, the story itself provides authenticating information. Before being kidnapped and sold into slavery, Solomon Northrup was a free man in New York state. The person who authenticates this information -- Henry Northrup, a white lawyer whose father owned Solomon Northrup's father -- appears as a character in the text.⁴ It is Henry Northrup who provides proof of Solomon Northrup's identity by calling the latter by his given name. By placing his authenticating device within the story itself Solomon Northrup creates a unified

⁴ Stepto argues that Solomon Northrup's strategy of including authenticating documents in the texts begins with the dedication. Northrup dedicates the book to Harriet Beecher Stowe, offering it as "another Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin." Stepto argues that in this case a work of fiction -- the tremendously popular Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) -- is being used to authenticate Northrup's own narrative. However, I disagree with this portion of Stepto's argument. After Stowe's novel was published it was, in spite of its popularity, severely criticised by Southerners, who claimed that it was a distorted, inaccurate, and sensationalized view of slavery. For this reason, Stowe published a sequel called The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin (1853). A non-fiction work, it contained the testimony of various slaves, which Stowe used to authenticate her previous novel. With this in mind, Solomon Northrup's statement that his narrative was another Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin suggests that *his* work authenticates Stowe's, rather than the other way around.

narrative rather than (as in Bibb's case) a collection of texts. Stepto argues that the integrated narrative is thus "in the process of becoming -- irrespective of authorial intent -- a generic narrative, by which I mean a narrative of discernible genre," such as an autobiography (4).

In the third phase of narration two things may happen: the text may become a "Generic Narrative," in which "authenticating documents and strategies are totally *subsumed by the tale*" or an "Authenticating Narrative," in which "the tale is *subsumed by the authenticating strategy*" (5). The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845) is an example of the former. Although the endorsements of white abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips are supposed to authenticate Douglass's story, Stepto argues that both men position themselves as a part of Douglass's audience by acknowledging his story's rhetorical power. Most importantly, it is undoubtedly Douglass himself who shapes his story by analyzing, and according importance to events such as his struggle with, and victory over, a "slavebreaker" intent on breaking his will. This shaping, or *poiesis*, as James Olney has called it, is what makes Douglass's work an autobiography.

In the authenticating narrative, however, the slave narrative "becomes an authenticating document for other, usually generic, texts" such as novels or histories. For example, in Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown (1853), William Wells Brown collects excerpts from his speeches, travel narrative and his own life story in order to authenticate his anti-slavery novel Clotel, or The President's Daughter. As Stepto writes, "Brown's personal narrative functions . . . as a successful rhetorical device,

authenticating his *access* to the incidents, characters, scenes and tales which collectively make up Clotel" (30).

Interestingly, Stepto does not mention the effect the slave's lack of literacy could have on the slave's control over the telling of his or her story. John Blassingame has noted that, since "antebellum narratives were frequently dictated to and written by whites, any study of such sources must begin with an assessment of the editors" ("Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems" 79). Blassingame writes that many were ministers, lawyers or other professionals. A significant number were not formally associated with abolitionists and many were "amateur or professional historians and biographers" whose interest in history prompted them to edit slave narratives (80). Blassingame also notes that very few published narratives were challenged by antebellum southerners: proof of their reliability. It is true, however, that in spite of their overall accuracy, many editors either made direct appeals to the narratives' white readership or "fleshed out the sparse details supplied by the fugitives to heighten the dramatic effect" (82).

Blassingame calls the editors of antebellum narratives "honest but biased men" (82). It is not inconceivable that some may have been as biased as some of the Federal Works Project interviewers, although the abolitionist sympathies of nineteenth-century editors would have prevented them from being the apologists that some white Southern FWP interviewers were. Writing of the narratives recorded by the Federal Writer's Project of the 1930s, C. Vann Woodward notes that, although some of the ex-slaves interviewed

may have had faulty memories -- they were, usually, recalling either events that they were told about or those that happened in early childhood -- "the most serious sources of distortion in the FWP narratives came not from the interviewees but from the interviewers -- their biases, procedures, and methods -- and the interracial circumstances of the interviews" (Woodward, "History from Slave Sources" 51). White interviewers frequently "adopted a patronizing or at best paternalistic tone and at worst an offensive condescension" while the ex-slaves responded with guarded deference and an evasive geniality, assuring their interviewers, who were sometimes the descendants of slavemasters, that they had been well treated during "slavery times" (51-52). With African American interviewers, however, "[c]andor and resentment surface more frequently. There is also a fuller sense of engagement and responsiveness in the joint enterprise of seeking truth about the past" (52).

Although criticism has largely focussed upon issues of literacy, authentication and authorial control, two critics of African-American literature, Melvin Dixon and Houston A. Baker, Jr., have written about the role of space in African-American slave narratives. In Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature (1987), Dixon examines the role landscape plays in selected African-American texts. Although Dixon begins his discussion with an examination of material space, he gives the spaces described a symbolic meaning. He argues that "[t]hree figures of landscape appear in . . . [African American] literature over time with such regularity that they become the primary images of a literary and figurative geography in the search for self and home: the

wilderness, the underground, and the mountaintop" (3). Confined to plantations, "[s]laves looked upon nature and determined in their lore that [these spaces] were places of deliverance" (17).

The wilderness was the sight of clandestine religious meetings and, for runaways, the location of a desperate, transient freedom. To come out of that wilderness was to make a spiritual, if not always a physical transformation: "[w]hen slaves sang, 'I'm so glad I come out de wilderness' . . . they were celebrating this transformation" (3-4). Meanwhile, the underground, represented by both the "lonesome valley" of the spiritual and, later, the underground chamber of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, is the place "where individual strength is tested and autonomy achieved." Its spiritual opposite, the mountaintop, "allows protagonists [to] transcend identity through self mastery" (4).

In spirituals, and eventually slave narratives, material space is transformed by the slaves into metaphor:

[slaves made] metaphorical and rhythmic use of language [to thwart] the dehumanizing effects of slavery by depicting alternative spaces and personae slaves could assume. . . . This reconstruction of self and space occurs principally through language. The singer [of spirituals] creates an aural space around him, defining a stage that is both communal and individual (14).

Like the singers of spirituals, therefore, "Afro-American writers, often considered homeless, alienated from mainstream culture, and segregated in negative environments, have used language to create alternative landscapes where black culture and identity can flourish apart from any marginal, prescribed 'place'" (2). For Dixon, language, rather than

physical space, serves as a refuge. Although I agree with his contention, which I quote in my next chapter, that the ability to *describe* space is a powerful way for the slave to reclaim his or her humanity, I argue that even the confining spaces designed to deny the slaves' humanity may become refuges where that humanity is covertly recognized.

Unlike Melvin Dixon, who ultimately sees space as a metaphor, Houston A. Baker draws upon the work of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in order to analyze the spaces in which African Americans live. In Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience (1977), Tuan describes "space" as "a feeling of openness [and] infinity." It is "unrestricted" (4). Most importantly, in this case, "[s]paciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act. . . .In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced" (2). Places, on the other hand, "are centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation are satisfied" (4). More importantly, place is an object of affection, an area of security and stability which we personally value. Houston Baker writes that this ability to invest a place with value also suggests an ability to set boundaries.

Baker claims that African Americans lack this ability. Without it, "traditional Afro-American geographies [are a] placeless place" ("Richard Wright and the Dynamics of Place" 86). Although Baker specifically refers to the ghetto setting of Wright's novel Native Son, his assertion applies to the plantation work space of slave narratives as well. In both cases, African Americans live(d) within boundaries set and maintained by another.

"Under such conditions what one calls and, perhaps, feels is one's own place would be, from the perspective of human agency, *placeless*" (87). Indeed, Baker writes that

PLACE is an Afro-American portion of the world which begins in a European DISPLACEMENT of bodies for commercial purposes. . . . Afro-America was a PLACE *assigned* rather than discovered. . . . The displacement of the slave trade that produced a placeless -- because marked and overseen by others -- hole was complemented by a southern agriculture that moved, prodded, drove "gangs" of men ceaselessly south and west (91).

Nor could the cabins in which African Americans sheltered be considered places: "The cabin's space is a function of those bent backs that give design to plantation economies; it is precisely not a proud sign of homeownership" (92). In Baker's view space, with all of its wide-ranging and infinite freedom, is far preferable. Indeed, in the earlier, more wide-ranging, Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory, Baker concludes that "all fixed points are problematical," since "[f]ixity is a function of power. Those who maintain place, who decide what takes place and dictate what has taken place, are power brokers of the traditional" (202). Baker values movement, writing that the African-American artist dislodges her/himself from the place assigned by the dominant culture and achieves movement and freedom by becoming a "translator," giving signs multiple meanings which elude the fixity the dominant culture would impose upon them. While this movement may be metaphorical, it is also actual -- the artist, in this case, takes the form of the transient blues singer, who escaped sharecropping by performing all over the country. In Dixon's work, slaves gain power by creating aural spaces with words; in Baker's, that power may be gained by changing the *meaning* of signs. The signs may be

words but they may also be something more concrete. As I note in my next chapter, Baker contends that Frederick Douglass changes the meaning of a particular space: the master's garden, an Eden from which slaves are barred, becomes, in Douglass's narratives, a false and poisonous paradise. In the work of both Dixon and Baker, therefore, African Americans combat the spatial control which confines them with language. I argue that this resistance has also led African Americans to combat spatial control by manipulating the spaces to which they have been confined. In order to argue this position, however, I must redefine the words "space" and "place."

I derive my definition of space from the work of geographer Edward Soja, who is greatly influenced by French Marxist Henri Lefebvre's book The Production of Space (1974). In this definition, "space" is not simply unbounded freedom, nor is it a stable geographical container of events. The spaces which slaves inhabit -- which I have chosen to call "slave space" -- are part of social space, a physical space which is produced by social relations, relations which include a society's economic system. Social space is both concrete evidence of, and a medium used to express, these social relations. Finally, social space can also *reproduce* the same social relations which produce it. In Soja's words, social space "is both outcome/embodiment and medium/presupposition of social relations and social structure" (Postmodern Geographies 129). Social life "must be seen as both space forming and space contingent, a producer and a product of spatiality" (129). Spatiality, or socially produced space, "must . . . be distinguished from the physical space of material nature and the mental space of cognition and representation, each of which is

used and incorporated into the social construction of spatiality but cannot be conceptualized as its equivalent" ("The Spatiality of Social Life" 93).

The social relations which produce, and are reproduced by, social space include a society's economic organization. Indeed, Henri Lefebvre writes that the social production of space is "inherent to property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of land) and also closely bound up with the forces of production (which impose a form on that earth or land)" (85). Lefebvre asserts that this space "cannot be separated either from the productive forces, including technology and knowledge, or from the social division of labour which shapes it, or from the state and the superstructures of society" (85). What I have chosen to call "slave space," then, was part of a social space produced by an economic system which required slave labour.

The African slave trade produced slave space immediately: once captured, the human cargo was confined to the hulls of slave ships, physically apart from those who would profit from their sale.

The space allotted to each slave on the Atlantic crossing measured five and a half feet in length by sixteen inches in breadth. . . .It was like the transportation of black cattle, and where sufficient Negroes were not available cattle were taken on. The slave trader's aim was profit and not the comfort of his victims, and a modest measure in 1788 to regulate the transportation of the slaves in accordance with the capacity of the vessel evoked a loud howl from the slave traders. "If the lateration takes place," wrote one to his agent, "it will hurt the trade, so hope you will make hay while the sun shines" (Williams 35).

Slaves proved invaluable to those who wished to profitably exploit the agricultural riches of the New World. As Williams argues, "[i]n the cultivation of crops like sugar,

cotton and tobacco, where the cost of production is appreciably reduced on larger units, the slave owner, with his large-scale production and his organized slave gang, can make more profitable use of the land than the small farmer or peasant proprietor" (6). What was produced, besides staples such as cotton and sugar, was slave space. The slave's occupation of that space was concrete evidence of his or her position as an object, as livestock, as an instrument of labour. Space was one medium slaveowners used to indicate their ownership, and thus, their superiority.

While a legal apparatus developed to define and maintain slavery, slave space also helped to maintain the master/slave relationship by reproducing the conditions which made it possible. As feminist geographer Daphne Spain notes, "[s]patial segregation is one of the mechanisms by which a group with greater power can maintain its advantage over a group with less power. In controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group's ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced" (16). Slaves could legally own neither themselves, their labour nor the space they occupied. Banned from schools, confined to the fields, the "quarters," and other slave spaces, they were deprived of knowledge which would allow them to escape. Frederick Douglass's master, Hugh Auld, for example, forbade his wife to teach the slave to read, warning: "if you learn him now to read, he'll want to know how to write; and, this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself" (My Bondage and My Freedom 146).

By maintaining the slave's illiteracy, Hugh Auld attempted to maintain the

boundaries of slave space. Boundaries were maintained by other means as well: slaves could not leave the plantation without the master's written "pass." Those who worked in the fields were constantly surveyed, either by a master or an overseer. Slaves who attempted to breach the boundaries of slave space or commit other infractions faced brutal chastisement, dismemberment or death. Such strategies were necessary because, as Edward Soja writes, "the social production of space is not a smooth and automatic process in which social structure is stamped out, without resistance or constraint, onto the landscape." No "once-and-for-all event," it "must be reinforced and restructured when necessary; that is, spatiality must be socially *reproduced*, and this reproduction process presents a continuing source of struggle, conflict and contradiction" ("Spatiality and Social Life" 97).

Slaves continually subverted their master's attempts to maintain order. In spite of the risks, theft from gardens, smokehouses and other strictly controlled spaces was not uncommon. Slaves also secretly left the quarters at night in order to visit each other and hold clandestine meetings. John Michael Vlach writes that "hidden within the official, ordered landscapes established by the planters, there was another system of definitions developed by the slaves. Almost without their owners' even being aware of it . . . slaves carved out landscapes of their own" (x). Efforts to keep the enslaved population in its "place" were countered by the slaves' attempts to carve out real, alternative spaces for themselves where they could be seen as subjects, rather than objects. Thus, while the slave system sought to largely deprive the slave/object of agency, slaves exercised that

very agency by creating spaces for themselves.

Chief among these alternative spaces were the slave quarters where, as John Blassingame points out, slaves gained a sense of self-worth. The quarters were the location of what bell hooks calls the homeplace, a domestic space which, by nurturing this sense of self-worth, became a site of resistance. As hooks points out,

Historically, African American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist (42).

Hooks' description of homeplace is similar to Yi-Fu Tuan's description of place in that homeplace "is a special kind of object. It is a concretion of value, though not a valued thing that can be handled or carried about easily; it is an object in which one can dwell" (12). In spite of Baker's contention that the slave cabin was not "a proud sign of homeownership," the cabin could have emotional value. Homeplace's value derived from the slaves' determination to recognize each other's humanity within the confines of a slave space which they, with a sense of ownership, appropriated as their own. The homeplace is not only the site where biological needs are met: it has also served as "a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (hooks 42). Traditional gender roles delegate the creation and maintenance of the home to women. For this reason, therefore, "it has been primarily the responsibility of black women to construct domestic households as spaces of care and

nurturance . . . where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects" (42).

Although the homeplace could create a small "community of resistance" for slaves, it was also very fragile: the debt, the death or even the mere whim of the master could break up a slave family.

Interestingly, however, the homeplace is absent from the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, the text I shall examine in my next chapter. This absence may be attributable to the fact that the emotional, if not financial, maintenance of the homeplace was a traditionally feminine role which Douglass, as a single man, would not have played. More probably, however, the omission of homeplace from Douglass's Narrative is a rhetorical strategy. By omitting homeplace, Douglass highlights both the slave system's disruption of the African American family and the slave's lack of agency, points which were emphasized by the abolitionist cause. While the omission does not amount to falsehood -- Douglass, like his brother and sisters, was removed from his mother at birth -- it does neglect his grandmother's active maintenance of a nurturing homeplace and the efforts she and his mother took to establish his sense of self-worth.

In the Narrative, Douglass focusses upon two polar opposites: slave space and free space. Although slaves recognized each other as subjects in the homeplace, such recognition did not affect their status as objects, as chattel which could be bought and sold. The Narrative, therefore, neglects homeplace since it is only in the "free" space north of the Mason-Dixon line where the African American's subjectivity is officially recognized. Such reasoning is problematic, since slaveowners could, and often did,

reclaim their property even before the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. At the same time, however, this depiction of North and South, of "free" space and "slave" space allows Douglass to dramatize his enslavement.

Notably, the recognition of Douglass's subjectivity is granted in a public space, *not* within the domestic confines of the homeplace. Although Douglass does briefly describe his marriage and the subsequent establishment of a homeplace of his own, this homplace is not a refuge. Rather, it is evidence of Douglass's free status and his occupation of free space, since slave marriages were not formally recognized in the South.

At the end of the Narrative Douglass describes his participation in an anti-slavery convention. His ability take part in the public sphere -- an ability signalled by his occupation of the speaker's platform in a public space -- is the ultimate sign that he has been recognized as a subject, rather than an object. The "public sphere" refers to public, and in this case political, discussion and attendant actions -- including the apparatus of governance and jurisprudence. Participation in this sphere was limited to men, citizens who were considered peers. In the South, of course, Douglass was *not* a white man's peer and, as such, he had no place in either that sphere or the spaces which represented it. Considered a dependent, the slave was attached to the master's household. As Jürgen Habermas has noted in his description of the Greek city-state, "[t]he reproduction of life, the labor of the slaves and the service of the women went on under the aegis of the master's domination; birth and death took place in its shadow; and the realm of necessity

and transitoriness remained immersed in the obscurity of the private sphere" (3).⁵ The activities of the private sphere were carried out in the domestic space and its environs. In this narrative, however, Douglass's concentration upon the polar opposites of free space and slave space leave little room for an examination of this complex overlapping of slave space and domestic space. In My Bondage and My Freedom (1855), however, Douglass recognizes and examines these complexities.

Even as he wrote the Narrative, Douglass knew that "free" space he occupied was only nominally free. The spaces African Americans were forced to occupy in the North, much like the "slave" spaces of the South, indicated -- and replicated -- their inferior social status, a status confirmed by the restrictions which virtually excluded them from the public sphere. In spite of the Narrative's triumphal finale, Douglass's subjectivity was not fully recognized in the public space of the "free" North. If Douglass was no longer an object, he was still something less than his white counterparts. My Bondage and My Freedom, therefore, begins with Douglass's earliest recollections of a space in which his subjectivity *was* recognized: his grandmother's homeplace. Although he was a child -- a factor which suggests that he would not have been treated as his grandmother's equal -- Douglass vividly contrasts his grandmother's recognition of his humanity with the dehumanizing slave space that was the kitchen yard on the Lloyd plantation.

⁵ In spite of my use of this definition, I do not wish to make a direct comparison between the antebellum South and the Greek city-state. The presence and position of slaves in both cases, however, make this brief quotation apt.

Removed to his master's domestic space, Douglass, taken as a perpetual child, is accorded only a half-measure of subjectivity. Unlike his white counterparts, he cannot independently establish a domestic space of his own, since he is permanently attached to that of his master. My Bondage and My Freedom, therefore, represents Douglass's continuing efforts to establish himself as an autonomous being whose subjectivity has been fully recognized.

While the ability to occupy a domestic space of his own is an important part of achieving this recognition, the ability to occupy public spaces and participate in the public sphere is still of primary importance. Although Douglass downplayed Northern segregation in the Narrative, he does not do so in My Bondage and My Freedom. Segregated space is the medium used to express, and the concrete evidence of, the African American's inferior status. Even Douglass's occupation of the public stage has become, in Eric Sundquist's words, "too much like the auction block" ("Literacy and Paternalism" 123). The condescension of his sometime mentors, who wished to confine him there, made his once triumphal participation in the public sphere problematic.

At least two critics -- Eric J. Sundquist and William Andrews -- have compared Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass and My Bondage and My Freedom. In "Frederick Douglass: Literacy and Paternalism" Sundquist writes that Douglass uses literacy to liberate himself, first from the paternalism of his owner and then, in the later autobiography, from that of his abolitionist mentors. In To Tell a Free Story Andrews argues that Douglass, having spent time in the circumscribed "freedom" of the north,

"realized that before freedom had beckoned him there had lain within him the hunger for a home, whetted by his bittersweet memory of his grandmother's 'circle' with him at the center" (219). While neither Andrews nor Sundquist deal specifically with space, their recognition of the role paternalism and the search for a recognized subjectivity play in Douglass's revisions has influenced my comparison of the role space plays in the two narratives. Anticipating my own project, Donald Gibson has compared My Bondage and My Freedom to Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, noting, as I do, that the former "reveals an expansion of the idea of home and a deepened significance of the concept" (161).

Although I trace significant connections between Douglass's first two autobiographies, I have decided not to include his third, the rarely discussed Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (1881, expanded in 1892). The first portion of Life and Times does not significantly differ from My Bondage and My Freedom. While the rest of the book details Douglass's public activities during and after the civil war, it does not depict slave space or homeplace with any significant difference. Although Douglass's stint as ambassador to Haiti would undoubtedly prompt a fruitful discussion on national space and American dominance, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this project.

Even though My Bondage and My Freedom has received a little more attention, it, like Life and Times, is still overshadowed by Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative. The latter is the most widely studied of all slave narratives: to review literary criticism of the slave narrative is to review, in large measure, literary criticism of Douglass's Narrative.

Stepto, Andrews, Olney, and other critics mentioned above all discuss this text.

The Narrative's primacy, however, is problematic, since it makes the experience of slavery a *masculine* one. Deborah McDowell has written that "[i]n its focus on the public story of a public life, which signifies the achievement of adult male status in Western culture, autobiography reflects and constructs that culture's definitions of masculinity" (198). This, she says, is particularly true of Douglass's Narrative. "You have seen how a man was made a slave, you shall see how a slave was made a man," Douglass writes, equating recognized subjectivity with masculinity (Narrative 294). Valerie Smith concurs with McDowell, writing that, "by mythologizing rugged individuality, physical strength, and geographical mobility, the narrative enshrines cultural definitions of masculinity" (Smith, Self-Discovery and Authority 34). Even though Douglass recognizes the importance of homeplace in his second narrative, he must, as a man, move into public spaces and establish himself in the public sphere.

Using Douglass to examine how male slaves experienced space does have significant limitations however, for, in many ways, Douglass was atypical: he was literate, and, unlike many fellow fugitives, such as Henry Bibb, he was unmarried. For a significant portion of his life, Douglass was also materially privileged: although the hardship and physical brutality which was the lot of the field hand was part of his experience, he spent much of his early life as a house servant in the city of Baltimore, receiving better food and clothing than many of his rural counterparts. Although Douglass's experience with rural and urban, agricultural and domestic, unskilled and semi-skilled slavery makes his

narrative an interesting one to examine, it is also important to note that, like the other narratives I shall write about here, it is not a transparent representation of slave life, nor is it, in spite of its popularity, representative of slave narratives as a whole. Indeed, as the above discussion of the differences between the 1845 Narrative and My Bondage and My Freedom (1855) indicates, Douglass shaped his representations of space to support his abolitionist argument.

While Douglass's narratives do not represent all slave narratives, they also do not adequately reflect the experiences of women. For this, I have turned to Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Published under the pseudonym Linda Brent in 1861, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl was soon eclipsed by the Civil War and remained lost in obscurity for more than a century. Because the well-known, white abolitionist writer L. Maria Child was named as the text's editor, various scholars, including Blassingame and Rawick, have questioned the narrative's authenticity. Incidents owes its present prominence solely to the pioneering work of Jean Fagan Yellin, who unearthed a cache of Jacobs's letters to Quaker abolitionist Amy Post in the early nineteen eighties. Some of the letters, reproduced in a modern edition of Incidents edited by Yellin, detail Jacobs's struggles with the manuscript.

Although it is in many ways representative of the experiences of female slaves, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, like Douglass's narratives, is somewhat atypical. While Deborah Gray White concludes that most slave women were assigned to both field and domestic labour throughout their lifetimes, Jacobs appears to have worked exclusively

in the "Big House."⁶ Like Douglass, and unlike the majority of her counterparts, Jacobs was literate. Significantly, she also had access to the support of her grandmother's independent homeplace. This support allowed her to confine herself in an attic to hide from a vigilant and vengeful master for seven years, a feat which would have been beyond the means of most slaves. Finally, like Douglass, Jacobs also shapes her representation of space. While this shaping prevents the narrative from becoming a transparent representation of slave life, it allows Jacobs to focus on issues surrounding domesticity and domestic space and the nineteenth century's feminine ideal, making her narrative an ideal examination of these issues.

Throughout her narrative, Jacobs makes it clear that, while white women who married occupied domestic spaces protected by law and custom, slave women, whose marriages were not formally recognized, were afforded no such protection. Married or single, infant or adult, slaves were perpetual dependents who remained attached to their masters' households. Although married slaves who lived in separately-built slave quarters could create homeplaces where they could recognize each other's subjectivity, couples could be separated by the will of the master: Jacobs reports that her married aunt slept on the mistress's bedroom floor, rather than with her husband.

Jacobs argued that, by depriving enslaved African Americans of domestic lives and

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Older, pregnant or enfeebled female field hands were often reassigned to "lighter" household labour. The lack of labour saving devices during this period and the amount of work which went into feeding and clothing a populous plantation during an era when everything was made by hand makes the "lightness" of domestic labour relative.

spaces of their own, slavery was responsible for the slave woman's lack of chastity. Subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation by masters, overseers and other men, unable to legally marry, and unprotected by law and family, enslaved women could not live up to the nineteenth-century ideal of womanhood. Jacobs herself was denied marriage and sexually harrassed by her master. Eventually, she succumbed to the blandishments of an older, white lover. Her loss of chastity, like her blackness and her apparent lack of fragility, emphatically excluded her from nineteenth century's ideal of True Womanhood, which demanded whiteness, fragility and sexual purity of the wives and mothers who were the centre of the family's domestic space. However, while Jacobs expressed remorse for her "fall," she also questioned a value system which systematically denied domestic space to enslaved African-Americans even as it valorized the sanctity of the home.

Jacobs's long confinement and her preoccupation with domestic spaces has led to several partial examinations of the role space plays in her narrative. Valerie Smith and Donald Gibson write at length about Jacobs's attic, the space of confinement which is both a means of escape and, as Gibson points out, "a place allowing defensive action, and also, because it conceals observer from observed, unobserved offensive action" (170). Mary Titus has examined the role the kitchen, traditionally a site of nurturance, plays in the narrative, while Donald Gibson's discussion of the role of domesticity in Incidents and My Bondage and My Freedom includes a discussion of Jacobs's desire to obtain "a physical space that she can call home" (169). Unlike Gibson, Titus and Smith, I link my discussion of Jacobs's desire for her own domestic space to her critique of True Womanhood. As

Hazel Carby and Frances Smith Foster suggest, Jacobs struggled to replace this exclusive ideal with an alternative, more accessible model of womanhood. While the nineteenth-century ideal allowed only those women who possessed the prerequisites of True Womanhood to occupy domestic spaces of their own, Jacobs, in replacing that ideal with a more accessible model, declared her right to occupy the domestic spaces which were the prerogative of her white, middle-class readers.

My final chapter examines Elizabeth Keckley's postbellum narrative, Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House. Keckley's early life of domestic labour, harsh treatment, and sexual exploitation mirrors Jacobs's own, a similarity which suggests that, in spite of their atypical literacy, the two shared experiences which for slave women were not uncommon. Still, Keckley's position in the Lincoln White House makes her narrative even more exceptional than those of either Douglass or Jacobs, for she could scarcely be said to represent all other African American women. Unlike them, however, Keckley has remained in the shadows. Although her association with President Lincoln's widow made her briefly notorious during her lifetime, her narrative has received little modern critical attention. In spite of this, I have included her in this thesis because her narrative links the public concerns of Douglass with the private, domestic concerns of Jacobs.

Although Keckley did not hold office, she had access to the White House, a space which is simultaneously public and private. Even though her position as the First Lady's seamstress relegated her to the White House's domestic spaces, I argue that she viewed

her presence in the White House as evidence that African Americans would at last be able to occupy the public spaces and take part in the public sphere of the newly reconstituted, post-bellum republic. Indeed, Frederick Douglass himself makes a cameo appearance in Keckley's narrative as the sole African American to be admitted to the official celebration of Lincoln's second inauguration: evidence, for the hopeful, that barriers would be broken down.

Harriet Jacobs ended Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl by expressing her still unfulfilled desire for a home of her own. Keckley, however, achieved enough economic success after her manumission to maintain a modest apartment which contained both a private, domestic space and a workroom for seamstresses she employed. In spite of this, she rarely mentions the personal space she has managed to create for herself. Keckley's son attended Wilberforce University in Ohio before his death on a Civil War battlefield; she had long been estranged from the husband whose name she still bore. Because her domestic space lacked affective ties, it was not a homeplace.

I argue that Keckley increasingly substitutes her relationship with Mary Lincoln and the Lincolns' domestic spaces for the affective ties of homeplace. Such a substitution was perilous for, while Mrs. Lincoln called the seamstress her "friend"--a term which suggests recognition of the seamstress's subjectivity -- the relationship is still unavoidably characterized by social and economic inequities. The sad aftermath of the narrative suggests that Keckley, by amalgamating public and private, had made a misstep. Far from being a signal of the African American's place in the new republic, her position was a

continuance of the enslaved, older woman's ante-bellum role as valued retainer. Keckley's presumption that her position allowed her to speak in the public sphere on Mary Lincoln's behalf prompted expressions of betrayal and indignation from both Abraham Lincoln's surviving family and the press.

In the light of the long era of repression and segregation which followed the Civil War, the public rebuke which Keckley suffered takes on greater meaning. She was ridiculed for not knowing her "place": plain evidence that, in spite of the Emancipation Proclamation, boundaries between blacks and whites remained fixed. Although slave space was ostensibly gone, African Americans were still confined to marginal spaces and largely excluded from the public sphere. The fields and quarters which had been slave spaces remained the provenance of ex-slaves, calling official proclamations of freedom into question and making the homeplace, the ex-slaves one true gain, as essential as ever.

TWO

Slave Space and Free Space in Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass began his 1845 Narrative with what he knew about himself and, just as importantly, with what he didn't know. "I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland," he wrote.

I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it My father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion, I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me (Douglass, Narrative 254-255).

The information which Douglass was forced to omit would have been considered essential for any of his free, white, nineteenth-century, autobiography-writing counterparts for, as William L. Andrews writes:

To locate oneself at a particular point in the temporal continuum gave the autobiographer a uniqueness and a degree of self-knowledge that can only augment his status in the eyes of the reader. . . . We might speculate that many autobiographers engaged in this ritual of personal documentation at the opening of their narratives because they felt a need to stake out a fixed point for themselves on the mental grids of their readers. Without precise temporal, spatial and familial coordinates, an autobiographer remained in some sense unidentified and unidentifiable to American readers. (To Tell a Free Story 27).

As a slave, Douglass can give no genealogical exposition, cite no antecedents and supply no birth date. Of the three "coordinates" Andrews mentions, the only means of identification Douglass can supply is an intimate topographical knowledge. His slave

status negates the need for the missing temporal information: a non-subject, he does not have the subject's knowledge about himself. Indeed, such knowledge is both unnecessary and dangerous, for Douglass's owner, "deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit" (Douglass, *Narrative* 255). Seen in this light, the broken and unrecognized family tie is of even less significance: a slave's only important tie is to his or her owner, whose sense of possession overrides any bond of kinship or affection. It is the space Douglass occupies which is the most important, for it, even more than his lack of knowledge, serves to demarcate his status.

However, Melvin Dixon notes that by describing slave space so minutely Douglass

sets up a dichotomy between place and person: the place that denies him humanity is described and recreated through the exercise of an intelligence that is the unmistakable sign of humanness. . . . This moment of reckoning and reasoning is the key to the way Douglass and other former slave narrators extricate themselves from the place that conspires to keep them ignorant and bestial (21).¹

For Dixon the ability to *describe* this space (for which he uses the term "place") is key: arguing that slaves made "metaphorical and rhythmic use of language [to thwart] the dehumanizing effects of slavery," he theorizes that slave narratives, like spirituals, used language to depict "alternative spaces and personae slaves could assume. . . . The singer [of spirituals] creates an aural space around him, defining a stage that is both communal and individual" (14). African American spirituals, stories and slave lore are "filled with

¹ I should note here that Melvin Dixon uses the word "place" in the sense that I reserve for the word "space," for, as I have noted in my introduction, "place," and particularly "homeplace," is an area where the slave's subjectivity is recognized.

geographical references that parallel various states of mind. Here physical geography links to spiritual landscape; . . . changes in the vernacular landscape -- hillsides, valleys, swamp land, level ground -- became references for the slave's feelings" (19).

Although Dixon sees the slaves' use of marginal spaces to meet and hide in as a source of strength, he sees language as their primary refuge, since it is language which allowed slaves to construct the alternative, aural spaces in which they find both subjectivity and sanctuary. If language allowed slaves to reclaim the subjectivity denied to them it also proved to be the key to their very survival: Ann Kibbey writes that "[t]he linguistic virtuosity of the slave who survived slavery must have been impressive. The incentive to acquire a linguistic capability far beyond what was minimally necessary to labor in the fields was considerable, if only because the penalty for linguistic mistakes was incredibly high. The wrong word, nuance, or gesture at the wrong time could bring brutal punishment, even death" (Kibbey 151-52).

Unlike Melvin Dixon, who ultimately sees space as a metaphor, I shall argue that, although the description of a space was an important show of autonomy, the occupation of that space played as important a part as language in the slaves' attempt to recover and preserve their subjectivity. The struggle is evident in the autobiographies of Douglass, who, even as he declared his subjectivity in writing, knew that an essential part of having it recognized by others was the ability to occupy the subject's physical space. While he documented his attempts to do so in increasing detail, I shall argue that he was slow to recognize and document the ways in which slaves, unable to escape slave space,

strategically claimed it, transforming it into homeplace, where they could recognize among themselves the subjectivity denied to them by society at large. Perhaps for purposes of anti-slavery propaganda, he did not depict the slave's attempts to maintain domestic space, which is the traditional site of homeplace, in his 1845 Narrative. The reasoning behind this omission was simple: slaves had no legal right to establish a domestic space of their own. Whatever domestic space the slaves occupied (when they occupied it) existed on the sufferance of the slaveowner. The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, therefore, examines only the polar opposites of free space and slave space.

Douglass's approach to space is signalled by the first chapter which, as Henry Louis Gates Jr. has observed, is characterized by a set of binary oppositions. By the fourth paragraph, "[t]he relations of the animal, the mother, the slave, the night, the earth, matrilinear succession, and nature [are] opposed to relations of the human being, the father, the master, the daylight, the heavens, patrilineal succession, and culture" (Gates, "Binary" 88).

When any two terms are set in opposition to each other the reader is forced to explore qualitative similarities and differences, to make some connection and, therefore, to derive some meaning from points of disjunction. . . . [Two] terms are brought together by some quality they share and are then opposed and made to signify the absence and presence of that quality. The relation between presence and absence, positive and negative signs, is the simplest form of the binary opposition (85).

Douglass uses the binary opposition to expose "an ordering of the world based on a

profoundly relational type of thinking, in which a strict barrier of difference or opposition forms the basis of a class. . . . [T]his device [is used to explicate] the slave's understanding of himself and of his relation to the world through the system of perceptions that defined the world the planters made" (86).

Curiously, Gates omits the most noticeable material opposition -- the dichotomy between free space and slave space. All of the oppositions Gates mentioned are, like the division between free space and slave space, produced by the (white) subject's attempts to fix boundaries between himself and the (black) other, the non-subject. Although it was initially developed for economic expediency, slave space was also a simultaneous, concrete expression of the (white) subject's desire for a clear division between master and slave. Like the mental boundary known as the stereotype, the boundary between slave space and free space serves to define the (white) subject. These boundaries are also mutually constitutive: the subject depends upon the negative presence of the other while free space, the space occupied by the free white subject, is defined by the presence of slave space.

Although Douglass's world is characterized by these oppositions, he makes it clear that they are neither given nor inviolable; rather, they exist, as Gates has noted, "in defiance of the natural *and* moral order" (89). That the planter's relationship with his enslaved chattel-son should be that of the master-owner is evidence that "it is the priority of the economic relation over the kinship tie that is the true perversion of nature." Gates writes that the "oppositions, all along, were only arbitrary, not fixed," a point that

Douglass makes an "ironic aside" on the curse of Ham (89). Douglass writes that if slavery was divinely ordained, "it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters" (Narrative 257).

Although Douglass viewed the opposition between slave and free (and thus, implicitly, that between free space and slave space) as both immoral and arbitrary, it is also clear that he and his contemporaries saw some binary oppositions as part of a natural order described by Michel Foucault in his essay "Of Other Spaces":

Contemporary life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable. . . . These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work (23).

Although the differentiation between free space and slave space was arbitrary, that between domestic space and public space -- at least in the mind of Douglass and his contemporaries -- was not. Douglass's protest, therefore, was also directed at the slave system's violation of spaces which he and his contemporaries deemed part of the "natural" order.

Douglass ends the first chapter of his Narrative with the most shocking example of this perversion of nature, one which involves the brutal violation of the private, domestic space which, as the opposite of public space, was what his readers would have believed to be a woman's "natural" place. The brutal flogging of Douglass's Aunt Hester may be seen

as a primal scene: "[i]t was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass," he writes (Douglass, Narrative 258). Hester, who had disobeyed the master's order that she stay in in the evenings, had been found that particular evening in the company of a slave whom the master had forbidden her to see, "a young man, who was paying attention to her, belonging to Colonel Lloyd" (258).

Although Douglass writes that the reason "master was so careful of her, may be safely left to conjecture" he does *not* leave it to the reader's conjecture, for, he continues, "[h]ad [master] been a man of pure morals himself, he might have been thought interested in protecting the innocence of my aunt, but those who knew him will not suspect him of any such virtue." Hester is taken into the master's kitchen, suspended by a hook and beaten while a "terrified and horror stricken" Frederick looks on from a hiding place in the kitchen closet (259).

Although Douglass introduces the scene with an architectural metaphor -- it is his first sight of the gate of a particular earthly hell, an infernal baptism -- the actual site of Hester's beating would in itself have a particularly horrific resonance for his Northern readers. That the kitchen was the site of white bourgeois domesticity is evident in the works of Douglass's white, female contemporaries. In her Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman Sarah Moore Grimké notes that the "more numerous class [of white women] in this country, who are withdrawn by education or circumstances from the circle of fashionable amusements" are wholly taken up with "the keep[ing] of their husband's house [I]t is considered a matter of far more consequence to call a

girl off from making a pie, or a pudding, than to interrupt her whilst engaged in her studies." Grimké's complaint -- that "[women's] education consists so almost exclusively in culinary and other manual operations" -- highlights the kitchen as the site of domesticity, the "natural" place for the women of the class of which she speaks (Letters 47-49). Even though Grimké complains of the nature of women's education, she herself does not question women's place as the family's primary care givers. To reveal, therefore, that this domestic space was the particular site of Hester's violation and Douglass's own childhood terror strikes forcibly at the reading audience's sensibilities. It also allows Douglass to make his point: the unnatural perversity of slave space, which denies personhood, also denies the slave the "natural" (and for his white audience sacrosanct) domestic space.

The kitchen could double as a slave quarters: plantation cooks, such as educator Booker T. Washington's mother, often lived in the kitchens they worked in. In Douglass's account, however, this domestic space is still a slave space, subject to the arbitrary will of the master. In the Narrative the kitchen's function as slave space apparently negates any possibility that it can be defined as the slaves' own domestic space, since domestic space can only truly be occupied by those whose subjectivity has been recognized by the society at large. With the biases of his white, middle-class audience in mind, Douglass links domestic space and public recognition of one's subjectivity here because, for this audience, domestic space is the product of legal marriage -- a rite which assumes the subjectivity, though not necessarily the equality, of its participants. Slaves, however, were legally

defined as property and, as such, could not legally marry. Unable to marry and seek the protection of their husbands--and of the legally recognized domestic space which was a woman's "natural" place--slave women were vulnerable to violation. Although slaves actually could, and did, form familial ties and domestic spaces of their own, Douglass's focus on the public recognition of subjectivity and his decision to depict women as victims precludes both his recognition of the importance of homeplace, in which slaves recognized each other's subjectivity, and an acknowledgement of the active role women played in constructing it.² While the omission of homeplace highlighted the slave woman's victimization, the middle-class biases of Douglass's audience may have made it seem necessary: although Douglass placed responsibility for the slave's deviation from nineteenth-century, middle-class sexual mores at the door of the slaveowner, domesticity without marriage may have brought to mind the stereotype of the African American's sexual "looseness".

Although the kitchen was associated with domestic space in the north, it was *not* part of the planter's domestic space on many large plantations such as Colonel Lloyd's. John Michael Vlach writes that, "[b]y the first decades of the eighteenth century, it was already customary for the owners of large plantations to confine various cooking tasks to separate buildings located some distance from their residences":

This move is usually interpreted solely as a response to practical

² The nineteenth-century depiction of the female slave as victim is examined in Jean Fagan Yellin's Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture.

considerations: the heat, noise, orders, and general commotion associated with the preparation of meals could be avoided altogether by simply moving the kitchen out of the house. . . . Moving such an essential homemaking function as cooking out of one's house established a clearer separation between those who served and those who were served. . . . The detached kitchen was an important emblem of hardening social boundaries and the evolving society created by slaveholders that increasingly demanded clearer definitions of status, position, and authority (Vlach 43).

Although it is unclear as to whether the Anthony's kitchen was detached from the house, it is made clear in Douglass's later narratives that the kitchen was generally work space and, more specifically, slave space. That this was a common practice is also made amply clear in other parts of the Narrative. When Douglass is sent from Baltimore to live with Thomas Auld he writes that "[t]here were four slaves of us *in the kitchen* -- my sister Eliza, my aunt Priscilla, Henny, and myself" (Narrative 286, emphasis added).

The kitchen yard was also work space. It was the site of soap, candle and syrup making, of washing and butchering. Vlach adds that "[t]he yard was definitely seen as slave territory by the slave children [,] who were kept there while their parents were working in the fields" (35). For Douglass the slave child's occupation of the yard was confirmation of his non-subject status, his imposed animality. Fed on "coarse corn meal boiled," the slave children "were . . . called, like so many pigs, and like so many pigs they would come and devour the mush; some with oystershells, others with pieces of shingle, some with naked hands, and none with spoons" (Douglass, Narrative 271).

Once again, Douglass suggests that the slaves lack domestic space. "I had no bed," Douglass says (271). Another time, connecting the general lot of the other slaves

on the plantation with his own, he writes, "[t]here were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these. [When the slaves have finished] . . . their washing and mending and cooking . . . [with] few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing either of these . . . old and young, male and female, married and single drop down side by side, on one common bed, -- the cold, damp floor . . ." (261). The apparent lack of propriety, seen in the lack of segregation according to sex, age and marital status, recalls Douglass's use of animal imagery and thus the idea that the slave is object rather than subject, chattel rather than human. The sleeping quarters, then, are depicted as a huge barnyard, an image effectively reinforced by Douglass's later description of the property valuation which occurs after his master's death: "We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination" (282). Where domestic space exists for slaves it is a mockery of the real thing: After describing the evaluation to which the slaves are subjected, Douglass accuses his former owner of "base ingratitude and fiendish barbarity," contending that his grandmother Bailey, "her frame already racked with the pains of old age," was abandoned to an isolated shack.³

³ The charge must have stung: Thomas Auld, then on his deathbed, took pains to refute it when he and Douglass reconciled in 1877 (Douglass, Life and Times 877).

[With] . . . complete helplessness fast stealing over her once active limbs, they took her to the woods, built her a little hut, put up a little mud-chimney, and then made her welcome to the privilege of supporting herself there in perfect loneliness; thus virtually turning her out to die! . . . The hearth is desolate. The children, the unconscious children, who once sang and danced in her presence, are gone. . . . She stands -- she sits -- she staggers -- she falls -- she groans -- she dies -- and there are none of her children or grandchildren present, to wipe from her wrinkled brow the cold sweat of death, or to place beneath the sod her fallen remains (284).

These scenes of dehumanizing depravation provide a sharp contrast to Douglass's description of Colonel Lloyd's garden.

Although he belonged to Colonel Lloyd's steward, Captain Anthony, Douglass spent part of his childhood on the Lloyd plantation, the showpiece of which was "a large and finely cultivated garden, which afforded almost constant employment for four men, besides the chief gardener."

It abounded in fruits of almost every description, from the hardy apple of the north to the delicate orange of the south. The garden was not the least source of trouble on the plantation. Its excellent fruit was quite a temptation to the hungry swarms of boys, as well as the older slaves, belonging to the colonel, few of whom had the virtue or the vice to resist it (264).

The colonel devised various stratagems to keep them out, the most successful of which was the "tarring of his fence all around; after which, if a slave was caught with any tar upon his person. . . he was severely whipped by the chief gardener [T]he slaves became as fearful of the tar as of the lash. They seemed to realize the impossibility of touching *tar* without being defiled" (264). Edward Dupuy writes that Douglass's depiction of the garden has symbolic significance: for Colonel Lloyd and his privileged

guests, this "literal garden is a smaller version of the garden of the plantation, which in turn is a diminutive of the garden of the South" (28). Drawing on the work of Lewis P. Simpson, he suggests that planters such as Lloyd idealized the Old South, seeing it as "an open, prelapsarian, self-yielding paradise" (quoted in Dupuy 27). Douglass undermines this symbolism, however. For him, the paradise is a false one, while the tar surrounding this exclusive and poisoned Eden is "a multifaceted unspoken sign," representing a defilement which is both physical and spiritual. The hungry slaves are forced to crave "the fruit of this false salvation." Douglass, however, assigns no blame to those slaves who do so; rather, he makes it clear that the tar "signifies the defilement of the garden itself" (Dupuy 29).

Well-versed in the Bible and critical of slaveowners' interpretation of the sacred texts, Douglass clearly wanted the reader to make the link between the Eden of Genesis and the slaveholder's corrupt and poisonous paradise. Whatever its symbolic significance, however, it is also true that this false Eden also represents the surplus value accrued by the owner of a large plantation. For Houston Baker the garden is "[t]he image of a vast abundance produced by slaves but denied them through the brutality of the owner of the means of production (i.e., the land)" (Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature 45). Baker suggests that the mark of the tar which Lloyd paints on the surrounding fence to keep the slaves out may also be read as an economic sign: "Blacks, through the *genetic* touch of the tar brush that makes them people of color, are automatically guilty of the paradoxically labeled 'crime' of seeking to enjoy the fruits of their own labor" (46).

The slaves cannot enjoy the fruits of their labour because they too are a means of production, possessions which are owned just as land is owned. As non-subjects they are thus barred from this "free" space, which is accessible only to the master class. Like the master himself, this free space is both defined and sustained by its economic and social relationship to its opposite, its other, the slave space which surrounds it. At the same time, however, it is slave labour which maintains the garden and makes it possible. The boundaries between "slave" and "free" space, threatened with collapse, can only be maintained by violence.

If, as the description of the garden shows, slaves were prohibited from entering the space which was the preserve of the free, master class, they were also forcibly confined to slave space by a combination of surveillance and violence. Of the murder of the slave Demby by overseer Gore, Douglass writes:

Mr. Gore once undertook to whip one of Colonel Lloyd's slaves, by the name of Demby. He [Gore] had given Demby but few stripes, when, to get rid of the scourging he [Demby] ran and plunged himself into a creek. . . refusing to come out. [After giving three warnings] . . . Mr. Gore then, without consultation or deliberation with anyone . . . raised his musket to his face, taking deadly aim at his standing victim, and in an instant poor Demby was no more (Narrative 268).

Another, unnamed slave shares Demby's fate when he is shot by Lloyd's neighbour, Mr. Bondley, for trespassing while in search of oysters to supplement his meagre rations. It is the act of *trespass*, of seeking to move beyond the set boundary of slave space, either to escape chastisement or to seek to possess some of the fruits of one's labour, that calls the wrath of the slave system down upon the trespasser. Any attempts to trespass must be

punished because, no matter how clearly marked, the boundaries between slave and free, between subject and non-subject are always on the verge of breaking down.

As white men and therefore as autonomous subjects, Bondley and Gore have the power to survey slave space and demarcate its boundaries. Indeed, Gore's very function as overseer is to conduct socially sanctioned surveillance to patrol the borders between slave space and free space. This ability to survey space, to oversee it and to mark out its boundaries is linked to the exercise of power.⁴ The shootings of Demby and the unnamed oysterman are what geographer Edward Soja would call a "process of reinforcement": they serve to violently reassert both the borders of slave space and the slave's place as the other. Straying beyond slave space displays autonomy which he, an object, a non-subject, is not allowed to possess. Indeed, Gore's explanation for his actions, which proves satisfactory to his employer, is that Demby's example, if unpunished, "would finally lead to the total subversion of all rule and order upon the plantation . . . the result of which would be, the freedom of the slaves, and the enslavement of the whites" (269). According to this logic, white freedom, white subjectivity and the free space which accompanies it can only be preserved if African Americans remain enslaved, restricted non-subjects. Douglass's concluding remark -- "It was a common saying, even among little white boys, that it was worth a half-cent to kill a 'nigger', and a half-cent to bury one" -- reflects the nature of the

⁴ It is precisely this which causes Houston Baker Jr. to observe that Afro-America is a "placeless place," since African Americans have not been allowed to determine the boundaries of the spaces to which they have been confined.

slave system, in which the slave is an object of exchange and transaction subject to forcible confinement in a physical space (270).

Douglass makes it clear that the slave space which he occupies on the Lloyd plantation holds none of the emotional value associated with homeplace:

The ties that ordinarily bind children to their homes were all suspended in my case. I found no severe trial in my departure. My home was charmless; it was not home to me; on parting from it I could not feel that I was leaving any thing which I could have enjoyed by staying. My mother was dead, my grandmother lived far off, so that I seldom saw her. I had two sisters and one brother that lived in the same house with me; but the early separation of us from our mother had well nigh blotted the fact of our relationship from our memories (272).

In the Narrative, the creation of homeplace depends upon public recognition of one's subjectivity -- recognition which, in turn, permits legally recognized marriage and the development of family ties which are developed and maintained *within domestic space*. What the Narrative amply demonstrates is the point that Douglass and his abolitionist contemporaries frequently reiterated: "The slave" Angelina Grimké wrote simply, "is entirely unprotected in his domestic relations" (Appeal 49). Where those "domestic relations" (legally recognized family ties and the sacred space which properly contained them) were absent there could be no sense of homeplace. Although, as I shall later demonstrate, Douglass's subsequent autobiographical revisions significantly alter this vision of slave life, he asserts in the Narrative that he is only drawn into domestic space when he is sent to the home of Hugh and Sophia Auld in Baltimore.

The Narrative's initial description of Douglass's "new home in Alliciana Street" is a

portrait of domesticity which contrasts with the squalid slave space from which he has come:

Mr. and Mrs. Auld were both at home and met me at the door with their little son Thomas, to take care of whom I had been given. And here I saw what I had never seen before, it was a white face beaming with the most kindly emotions, it was the face of my new mistress, Sophia Auld. . . . It was a new and strange sight to me, brightening up my pathway with the light of happiness. Little Thomas was told, there was his Freddy, -- and I was told to take care of little Thomas; and thus I entered upon the duties of my new home with the most cheering prospect ahead (Narrative 273).

Unlike the Lloyd plantation, the Auld home carries with it the promise of domestic ties: with Sophia Auld's kindness comes the possibility of a fraternal relationship with the child that has been entrusted to Douglass's care. Although the words "his Freddy" convey the Aulds' sense of ownership, they do not, at the moment, dim the slave's sense of acceptance. In his second autobiography Douglass wrote: "I had been treated as a *pig* on the plantation; I was treated as a *child* now" (My Bondage and My Freedom 142).

Young Frederick was approximately eight years old when he entered the Auld house for the first time. By entering the domestic, private space reserved for women and children he at last gains the subject position suitable to a human child. This does not mean, however, that he has achieved equality, for the child is a dependent who is always subject to the will of the father. "All married women, all children and girls who live in their father's house are slaves," writes Southern aristocrat Mary Chesnut, a statement which, although it elides the very real differences between Blacks and Whites, highlights the state of dependence all three share during the nineteenth century (Civil War 729).

What Frederick eventually learns is that he, as a slave, is in a state of perpetual childhood, a state which will be examined in more detail in my next chapter.

This dramatic accession of domesticity and its accompanying domestic space is attributed by Douglass to "a special interposition of divine Providence in my favor" (Narrative 273). William S. McFeely surmises, however, that Douglass's removal bore as much evidence of the human hand as the hand of providence. McFeely argues that Captain Anthony and his daughter, Lucretia Auld, may have noticed Douglass's early precocity and sought, in some limited and tightly controlled way, to develop it by sending the boy to Lucretia's brother-in-law (23-24). Be that as it may, Douglass had, in this version of his story at least, no interest in documenting his ambivalent relationship with the Aulds: what is emphasized in this version of his story is the unjust denial of a proffered domestic paradise.

In the Narrative Douglass quickly finds that, although he is *in* domestic space he is not *of* it. Although Sophia Auld has been "in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery," she soon ingests "the fatal poison" (Narrative 274). The Narrative's depiction of Sophia Auld's descent from "the lamb-like disposition" of a former weaver to the "tiger-like fierceness" of the slave owner is interesting in this case primarily because it demonstrates how the separation between slave and master was maintained when the physical demarcation of slave space and free space was absent (277). When Hugh Auld learns that his wife has been teaching the young Frederick to read he forbids it, "telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach

a slave to read. . . .'[I]f you teach that nigger. . . how to read, there would be no keeping him. . . .He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master'" (274). Auld's instructions to his wife were necessary, for Mrs. Auld "at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute" (274). Although one cannot equate the two, Sophia Auld, as a woman in the nineteenth century, is also oppressed. Patriarchal authority, however, ensures that slave and mistress remain at odds -- there must be no alliance.

Although Douglass later makes clear that the kitchen is the slaves' primary living space when he is removed to Thomas Auld's home, it is probable that his duties in the home of Hugh and Sophia Auld, which included errand running and the care of two year old Thomas, precluded any sharp spacial demarcation. Thus the recognition/re-enforcement of the young Frederick's otherness must be maintained mentally: if the education of slaves is prohibited, so too is the sentiment which prompts the offering of that education--the recognition of the slave as a subject.

Douglass's description of his enforced illiteracy as an effort to "shut [him] up in mental darkness" is curiously, and perhaps significantly, architectural, for the image brings to the fore the question of *mental* space. Hugh Auld's effort to maintain the young Frederick's otherness by prohibiting the resumption of an intellectual relationship between Frederick and Sophia represents an attempt to organize the mental, or cognitive space of

both the young Frederick (who must be excluded from that very language which would eventually allow him to inscribe himself as subject) and Sophia Auld (who must mentally compartmentalize the young Frederick by recognizing his otherness). The restriction is also a way of potentially managing the slave's access to physical space: Auld knew that with reading would come geographical knowledge and knowledge of the possibility of escaping slave space. Indeed, in My Bondage and My Freedom Auld's admonition includes the words, "If you learn him now to read, he'll want to know how to write, and, this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself" (Douglass, My Bondage 146). Auld's use of proverbs is also spatial: "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell" (Douglass, Narrative 274).

When Douglass learns that exclusion from the world of written language is the means by which his inferior status is maintained he does something which, for this argument at least, is particularly important: he seeks further instruction, not within domestic space -- for it is denied him -- but outside, in the public space of the city of Baltimore. "When I was sent on errands, I always took my book with me, and . . . found time to get a lesson before my return. I used to carry bread with me. . . . This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little [white] urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge" (278).

In addition to instruction the young Frederick also receives commiseration:

I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. 'You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life!* Have not I as good a right to be free as you

have?' These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free (278).

The depiction of this interaction -- its fellowship, its sympathy, its seeming equality -- is perhaps a conscious echo of the relationship that Douglass apparently has with Garrison and other anti-slavery activists.⁵ That he can find such companionship on the streets of Baltimore highlights the fact that those public byways are *not* strictly slave space, rather, they are the site of a promiscuous mixing of free and enslaved blacks and working class whites, a mixture which makes the slaveowners of Maryland particularly wary.

Historian Barbara Fields has written that by the middle of the nineteenth-century there were actually *two* Marylands: northern Maryland, including Baltimore, "was an overwhelmingly white and free labour society, the only region of the state in which industrial activity had grown to significant proportions. Black people contributed only 16 percent of its population, and slaves less than 5 percent." By contrast southern Maryland, (including St Mary's, where Douglass was later to reside), "was a backward agricultural region devoted primarily to tobacco. . . The population of the southern counties was 54 percent black and 44 percent slave." The Eastern Shore, the place of Douglass's birth, was also primarily agricultural, although it "was neither as slave and black as southern Maryland nor as free and white as northern Maryland." Twenty percent of the total population of the Eastern Shore were slaves; forty percent of the total population was

⁵ Although, as I shall later demonstrate, Douglass has to struggle to establish his equality in this arena too: a fact that he is not ready to reveal to the readers of 1845.

black (Fields 6).

Relying on white labour -- labour which probably included the parents of Douglass's instructors -- Baltimore, the economic hub of the Ohio valley, was also largely independent of the slave economy to the south. Slave owners from southern and eastern Maryland were particularly wary of the possible erosion of their own interests by this economic behemoth to the north. They ensured that their interests were protected by making sure that the slaveowning parts of the state were over represented in the state legislature. Barbara Fields observes that by 1851 Maryland, which in 1846 required the "unanimous vote of both houses in two different sessions of the General Assembly" to become a free state, forbade the abolition of slavery outright (20-21).

Still, the city's unavoidable mix of slave and free blacks in separately established churches and in public places, its independence from the slave system, and its inability to constantly maintain rigid borders between slave space and free space influenced young Frederick as much as his surreptitiously obtained Columbian Orator did. With his greater knowledge of space he was able to survey, to judge and evaluate the space he inhabited and began to consider the possibility of free space--an unthinkable act for a slave. "The more I read the more I was lead to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery" (Douglass, Narrative 279).

The young Frederick was able to do this precisely because he himself managed to

evade surveillance. He was now closely watched in the Auld household: having been warned of the dangers of literacy by her husband, Sophia Auld "finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband. . . Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper." And yet, even at this point the surveillance was not constant: besides his frequent forays into the promiscuous mix that was Baltimore there were other, private moments. "My mistress used to go to class meeting. . . and leave me to take care of the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written" (281). After so much freedom of movement Frederick, returned to Thomas Auld after the Auld brothers had a disagreement, was found to be lacking in discipline. "[Thomas Auld] and myself had quite a number of differences. He found me unsuitable to his purpose. My city life, he said, had . . . almost ruined me for every good purpose He resolved to put me out, as he said, to be broken; and for this purpose, he let me for a year to a man named Edward Covey" (289).

"I was somewhat unmanageable when I first went there" Douglass admits, "but a few months of this discipline tamed me. Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul and spirit" (293). Admittedly "awkward" when he is set to farm work for the first time, Douglass's inexperienced mismanagement of a team of oxen results in a savage beating, the description of which has caused Douglass's biographer William McFeeley to speculate that Covey's violence had some kind of perverse, psychological component (44). The constant threat of violence is backed up by an unrelenting

surveillance.

There was no deceiving him. His work went on in his absence almost as well as in his presence and he had the faculty of making us feel that he was ever present with us. . . .Such was his cunning, that we used to call him, among ourselves, "the snake". . . .His comings were like a thief in the night. He was under every tree, behind every stump, in every bush, and at every window, on the plantation (Douglass, Narrative 291).

Covey's omnipresence suggests that a fundamental part of his "nigger breaking" operation is constant surveillance. Indeed, as I have already noted, Douglass's accounts of Gore and the other overseers on the Lloyd plantation indicate that this overseeing, this surveying, is key to the maintenance of slave space and its boundaries. On the Lloyd plantation the young Frederick, too little to work and breed, was a peripheral figure. Now no longer an observer, he himself must bear the effects of this surveillance.

The attempt to explain the effects of surveillance which Douglass describes draws one almost unavoidably to Michel Foucault, for it is Foucault's Discipline and Punish which details power's use of surveillance and space to effect the individual's discipline and utility. And yet, although Foucault's observations regarding the disciplinary aspects of public institutions are illuminating, the Foucauldian model can be applied in only a limited fashion to the South's very own "peculiar institution." Nonetheless, these very limitations prove to be useful, for they provide a greater understanding of the relationships--and the space--in which Douglass found himself enmeshed.

Foucault argues that by the nineteenth century both the European powers and the United States underwent, with varying degrees of rapidity and consistency, a profound

revolution. Previously, the spectacle of judicially sanctioned public executions had been the ultimate expression of sovereign might, of "a power that not only did not hesitate to exert itself directly on bodies, but was exalted and strengthened by its visible manifestations; . . . of a power that presented rules and obligations as personal bonds, a breach of which constituted an offence and called for vengeance; of a power for which disobedience was an act of hostility" (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 57). Paradoxically, however, there was a risk that the very people who were to hold this spectacle in awe could reject it in a riotous show of solidarity. From the end of the eighteenth century, therefore, reformers had called for a reformed economy of power: no longer subject to "a central excess," the "new right to punish" was to be "neither too concentrated at certain privileged points, nor too divided between opposing authorities" (80). Punishment was to be based on "the defense of society" rather than the "vengeance of the sovereign" (90).

The object now was not to inspire awe *en masse* by directly and visibly torturing the body of the condemned; rather, power was to be subtly exercised in the form of coercion. The body of the individual was to be subjected to a discipline which would regulate its "movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity" in the interests of moral reform, military precision and economic efficiency (137). This coercion was ensured by spatial regulation and supervision. In the workshop, the army camp, and the prison there must be regulatory spaces which, while flexible enough to allow movement, would "avoid distributions in groups, break up collective dispositions [and] analyse confused, massive or transient pluralities" (143). Assigned to a particular, often cellular space, the individual is

subjected to a continuous supervision. Ever conscious of the possibility of being surveyed, the individual "who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-203).

Thus it is the slaves' conviction of Covey's apparently ubiquitous presence which acts as an internalized, coercing force and ensures that "[Covey's] work [goes] on in his absence almost as well as in his presence" (Douglass, Narrative 291). This surveillance also prevents any dangerous combinations: the ever-present eye makes it difficult for the hands to establish the overt solidarity which could lead to their own escape. Indeed, active attempts are made to prevent such collectives from forming: Douglass reports that the Sunday meetings which he later conducted were dispersed by white churchmen and slaveowners who "rushed in upon us with sticks and stones, and broke up our virtuous little Sabbath school" (304).

It is also clear (and will become even clearer in Douglass's later, more detailed accounts) that the disciplinary power to which the slaves were subjected was, in some irregular fashion, often pyramidal. The surveillance provided by an hierarchical, pyramidal power is, as Foucault notes, the most efficient, since it "enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet since it is everywhere and always alert, . . . [and] by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely 'discreet', for it functions

permanently and largely in silence" (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 177). The pyramidal organization is a power relation which sustains itself, not by the spectacle of public events but by "the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes" (177).

The gaze of the master is substituted, in his absence, by the gaze of the overseer, who is himself overseen: Douglass notes that Col Lloyd dismisses Mr. Hopkins as overseer, possibly because "he lack[s] the necessary severity to suit Col. Lloyd" (Narrative 7). In My Bondage and My Freedom Douglass describes the plantation hierarchy in much greater detail: fellow slaves such as the kitchen termagant "Aunt" Katy, who beats and starves the young Frederick, and her equally fearsome male counterpart, "Uncle" Isaac Cooper, who terrorizes slave children in the name of religion, effectively function as representatives of the disciplinary gaze even as they themselves are surveyed and subject to discipline. Even Covey, who is Douglass's master for the year, is a part of a disciplinary relay: he must be seen to uphold a certain disciplinary standard. When Douglass attempts to explain why he has escaped reprisals for defending himself against Covey (reprisals which, for any African American, whether slave or free, were almost inevitable) he falls back on this disciplinary relay for an explanation:

Mr. Covey enjoyed the most unbounded reputation for being a first-rate overseer and negro-breaker. It was of considerable importance to him. That reputation was at stake; and had he sent me--a boy about sixteen years old--to the whipping-post, his reputation would have been lost; so, to save his reputation, he suffered me to go unpunished (299).

The neighbouring slaveholders' gaze helps to at least partially ensure that the individual slaveholder upholds the disciplinary standard even as the standards themselves are subject

to change: if Covey is afraid of losing his reputation for severity, his Baltimore counterparts are, Douglass notes, unwilling "to incur the odium attaching to the reputation of being a cruel master" (275). "There is a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the plantation. He is a desperate slaveholder, who will shock the humanity of his nonslaveholding neighbors with the cries of his lacerated slave" (275).

In spite of the fact that the Foucauldian model would seem to explain the mechanics of the slave system, its limited usefulness is readily apparent. For one thing, the shift from the economy of power based upon spectacle to one based upon surveillance is not entirely applicable here. Although America's resolute break from the arbitrary power of the sovereign is part of a mythology so embedded in the national psyche that it needs no comment, it should also be noted that slavery absolutely depended upon spectacle, as well as surveillance, for the maintenance of the slave's subjugation. Indeed, such was the slave owner's position in relation to his slaves that the designation of "sovereign" would not be inappropriate here. Ownership *was* a personal bond and disobedience was construed as "an act of hostility," punishable by a display of direct force exerted upon the body, a flogging designed to exhibit the owner's power and to serve as an example to other slaves. Although plantation manuals deplored the overuse of corporeal punishment, masters recognized that their power rested on its effects: "'Were *fidelity* the only security we enjoyed,' wrote a planter in the Southern Patriot, 'deplorable indeed would be our situation. The fear of punishment is the principle to which we must and do appeal, to keep

them in awe and order" (quoted in Genovese 65) In 1866 a former slaveowner reflected,

Eaton [the overseer] must find it very hard to lay aside the old strap. -- As for myself, I would give a good deal to amuse myself with it, a little while. I have come to the conclusion that the great secret of our success was the great motive power contained in that little instrument (quoted in Genovese 65).

While Eugene Genovese claims that there is much evidence that many slaveowners exercised self-control by rarely, if ever, using the whip, he also acknowledges that a great majority of slaves could, at sometime in their lives, expect to experience corporeal punishment of one form or another (64).

In his description of the individual's coercion, the docility-utility imposed upon the worker, the prisoner, or the scholar through the regulation of the actions of the body, Foucault explicitly exempts slavery from the form of domination he describes. While slavery is based upon "a relation of the appropriation of bodies. . .the elegance of the [non-slave] discipline lay in the fact that it could dispense with this costly and violent relation by obtaining effects of utility at least as great" (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 137). This is not to say that the threat of violence is abolished by the economy of surveillance that Foucault describes; rather, punishment is to be meted out in a fashion that is both measured and consistent. Penal reformers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries complained about what Foucault calls a "badly regulated distribution of power": the identification of the right to punish with the personal power of the sovereign resulted in "conflicts and discontinuities" in the method of punishment (79-80). With the change from spectacle to surveillance, systems of discipline are marked by "less

severe penalties, a clearer codification, a marked diminution of the arbitrary, a more generally accepted consensus concerning the power to punish" (89). This carefully regulated, incremental punishment was not a characteristic of the slave system: indeed, Douglass makes a point of the masters' arbitrariness, noting, for example, that Col. Lloyd's stablemen "never knew when they were safe from punishment. They were frequently whipped when least deserving, and escaped whipping when most deserving it. Every thing depended upon the looks of the horses, and the state of Colonel Lloyd's own mind when his horses were brought for him to use" (Narrative 264-265).

It is the irregularity of both surveillance and punishment that differentiates the slave system which Douglass describes from the regulated "economy of power" represented by Foucault's description of institutions. What one can finally say is that slave space functioned in a way which, though comparable, was not totally analogous to Foucault's thesis and its ultimate model: Bentham's panopticon, in which the prison tiers surround, and are constantly surveyed by a tower from which every action may be seen. Although slave space was demarcated in a way which facilitated surveillance and that surveillance was, like the ability to arrange slave space and free space, indicative of the slave owner's power, the relationship between the slave and the slave owner was markedly different from the constant, anonymous, all-seeing surveillance provided by the panopticon.

Perhaps the best indication of the difference between the institutions which Foucault describes and the South's own "peculiar" institution is Douglass's initial response

to Covey's final beating. The beating occurs on a hot day in August when Douglass and his fellow slaves are "engaged in fanning wheat" (294). "The work was simple, requiring strength rather than intellect, yet, to one entirely unused to such work, it came very hard" (294). Douglass collapses with sun stroke and, unable to rise, is kicked and beaten by Covey. When Covey is momentarily distracted Douglass decides to take action: "At this moment I resolved, for the first time, to go to my master, enter a complaint, and ask his protection" (295). For Douglass, power is not represented by the anonymous, all-seeing panopticon; rather, it is invested in the owner, the appropriator of Douglass's body. American slave owners who, for the most part, lived in close proximity to their slaves, cast this appropriation in paternalistic terms, stressing "Ole Massa's ostensible benevolence, kindness, and good cheer" (Genovese 4). Pro-slavery writers such as George Fitzhugh argued that, far from oppressing the slave, slavery was actually a benevolent institution designed to protect the weakest members of society:

We do not set children and women free because they are not capable of taking care of themselves, not equal to the constant struggle of society. To set them free would be to give the lamb to the wolf to take care of. Society would quickly devour them. . . .[H]alf of mankind are but grown-up children, and liberty is as fatal to them as it would be to children (Sociology 230-231).

This theoretical "insistence upon mutual obligations[,] duties [and] responsibilities" means that Douglass can appeal to his master even though he is not sure how his appeal will be received. Historian Eugene Genovese notes that slaves could and did often resort to such appeals: more than one overseer was discharged on the strength of the inability to gain

"some degree of support in the [slave] quarters" (Genovese 15).

In this case, however, capitalism wins out over paternalism--although Douglass's appeal "seem[s]. . . at times to affect" Auld, Auld "ridicule[s] the idea that there was any danger of Mr. Covey's killing [Douglass and] that should [Auld remove Douglass from Covey's employ, Auld] would lose the whole year's wages" (Douglass, Narrative 296). Auld gives his battered chattel a threat, a dose of Epsom salts (revealed in Life and Times of Frederick Douglass to be a universal panacea) and permission to spend the night (Douglass, Life and Times 581). Douglass returns without his master's protection and with "the alternative before me,-- to go home and be whipped to death, or stay in the woods and be starved to death" (297).

Douglass contemplates his ultimate fate in the woods, which, as I have already mentioned, were the site of clandestine community -- the location of secret meetings and transient freedom. For Douglass, however, this marginal space does not represent a viable alternative to the slave space which he regularly occupies: ever subject to the invasions of the slave owner's surveillance, in the form of slave patrols, marginal space cannot sustain life. In spite of Douglass's judgement, however, this marginal space does afford him a temporary refuge in the form of an offer from a fellow slave named Sandy Jenkins.

Sandy had a free wife who lived about four miles from Mr. Covey's; and it being Saturday, he was on his way to see her. I told him my circumstances, and he very kindly invited me to go home with him. I went home with him and talked this whole matter over, and got his advice as to what course it was best for me to pursue (297).

This could potentially be seen as a powerfully subversive use of marginal space.

The consultation between Frederick and Sandy is held, not in the slave quarters of the plantation -- an area which, as slave space, is subject to Covey's disciplinary gaze -- but in a domestic space shared, however intermittently, by Sandy and his unnamed wife. That this shared domestic space exists only on sufferance -- Sandy must, in all probability, obtain the master's permission to make such conjugal visits -- does not necessarily diminish the space's potential significance. The homes of free Blacks like Jenkins' wife were, like the surrounding woods, on the margins of the more strictly controlled slave space of the plantations and, as such, could allow slaves to covertly seek some form of forbidden autonomy. Occupation of such spaces for such purposes was, of course, dangerous: given that these same spaces could be arbitrarily invaded (particularly at night) by white slave patrols seeking to establish the surveillance of slave space, any autonomy achieved there was highly precarious. It is here, however, that Sandy offers what he believes to be the most powerful defense in a system in which a chattel is prohibited from defending himself--a root which, if carried on the right side, "would render it impossible for Mr. Covey, or any white man, to whip [Douglass]" (297). The root -- or Douglass's Sunday morning return -- prevents an immediate whipping. On Monday Covey enters the stable and attempts to bind and whip Douglass. Covey gets the worst of the ensuing struggle and Douglass's victory "[revives] within [him] a sense of [his] own manhood" (298). Douglass attributes this victory solely to his own semi-dormant self-confidence while Sandy Jenkins naturally remains convinced of the power of the antidote prescribed. "We used frequently to talk about the fight with Covey, and as often as we did so, he

[Jenkins] would claim my success as the result of the roots which he gave me." At this point Douglass assumes the voice of anthropological authority, stating that, "[t]his superstition is very common among the more ignorant slaves. A slave seldom dies but that his death is attributed to trickery" (303).

It is interesting, but not surprising, that Douglass should dismiss Sandy Jenkins' conclusion with scientific scepticism. After all, Douglass himself is *not* one of "the more ignorant slaves." By asserting both his knowledge of black folk beliefs and his scepticism regarding them Douglass telegraphs his intelligence, his rationality, and his authorial reliability to his audience. And yet, although Douglass rejects the possibility of the root's efficacy, there is no reason to believe that Sandy's remedy did not work: as Eugene Genovese writes, "[n]o romantic veil need be cast over slave practice, much of which was destructive or medically useless, to recognize that it offered the slaves a necessary degree of psychological support and produced positive physical results" (227). The fact that Frederick did not receive a whipping on Sunday morning must have had some positive psychological effect, an effect which he acknowledges when he admits that "this singular conduct of Mr. Covey really made me begin to think that there was something in the *root* which Sandy had given me" (297). Douglass's ultimate rejection of this folk belief, however, has another effect besides that of establishing his authorial reliability: by rejecting the root's efficacy he also rejects the potential power of the marginal space in which it is offered. There is no possibility that an alternative space, a *homeplace* in which the slave can, however briefly, claim his subjectivity, can be found within the realm of

slave space.

Douglass's apparent conviction of the inefficacy of attempts to establish *homeplace* on the margins of slave space is reflected in his description of his brief sojourn with Sandy Jenkins. Douglass neither names Sandy's wife nor describes the other forms of aid (food, lodging and, most probably, the long delayed tending of his wounds) that he receives. To do so would implicitly contradict the picture of slave life which Douglass has consistently presented throughout the Narrative, a picture which, for the slave, does not include a personal domestic space. It will be remembered that Douglass's description of life on the Lloyd plantation stressed that all waking, sleeping and working space is slave space, created and shaped by the master/slave relationship. The slave quarters of the Lloyd plantation are like stables into which slaves of all sexes and ages crowd indiscriminately, where blood ties are not recognized, and where slaves are valued according to the same criteria as cows, horses and pigs. The fractured nature of the slaves' familial relationships and their official status as objects does not allow them to produce and occupy a domestic space of their own. The one detail of his temporary refuge that Douglass vouchsafes is the fact that Sandy Jenkins does not live with his wife -- a fact which would support his assertion that slaves have no domestic life and no shared space in which to live it.

Notably, the details of Sandy's homeplace emerge in My Bondage and My Freedom, when Douglass rectifies the Narrative's omission of homeplace.

Even though Douglass implicitly rejects the possibility that the marginal space which Jenkins and his wife inhabit may serve as a domestic homeplace for slaves, his own

revived "manhood" makes him take advantage of these same marginal spaces when he takes up the role of teacher: "I held my Sabbath school at the house of a free colored man, whose name I deem it imprudent to mention; for should it be known, it might embarrass him greatly, though the crime of holding a school was committed ten years ago" (304). If Douglass has now determinedly assumed the position of subject it is not the space that he occupies which allows him to do so. Douglass explicitly attributes his burgeoning sense of "manhood" --that is, his sense of his own subjectivity -- to his apparently unaided victory over Covey and to his hard-won efforts to access the forbidden knowledge, the literacy which is evidence of the master's power: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man" he says at the beginning of his account of these events (294). It is not, as the concept of homeplace suggests, the daily occupation of a marginal space made significant *within* slave space which conveys to him his sense of his own subjectivity. In the Narrative Douglass's sense of his own embattled subjectivity is drawn from the struggle to physically defend himself and acquire and transmit a particular knowledge -- and later, a particular space -- which is equally privileged and proscribed.

When Thomas Auld rents Douglass's services to a new master Douglass's desire to obtain the privileged free space, where he will be recognized as a subject, causes him to act. Although he has been hired out to another, less severe master, he "[begins] to want to live *upon free land* as well as *with Freeland*" (305). With a small group of fellow slaves Douglass begins to concoct an escape plan. It has already been noted that it was in the

interest of the slave owner to keep the slaves' knowledge of free space to a minimum and, even in this case the attempt has been at least partially successful: although Douglass is probably the most literate of the three he admits that

[w]e could see no spot, this side of the ocean, where we could be free. We knew nothing about Canada. Our knowledge of the north did not extend farther than New York; and to go there, and be forever harassed with the frightful liability of being returned to slavery -- with the certainty of being treated tenfold worse than before -- the thought was truly a horrible one, and one which it was not easy to overcome (306).

In spite of this, Douglass, who is probably the most well-travelled of his compatriots, can act as guide. On his way south from Baltimore to St. Michael's, Douglass had "paid particular attention to the direction which the steam boats took to go to Philadelphia. I found, instead of going down, on reaching North Point they went up the bay, in a north-easterly direction. I deemed this knowledge of utmost importance" (285). Pennsylvania lies along Maryland's northern border. By stealing the master's canoe and sailing up Chesapeake Bay and past Baltimore the group can conceivably reach the free, border state of Pennsylvania. Although the escapees hope to pass as fishermen, they are also armed with passes, forged by Douglass, which give them permission to spend Easter in Baltimore. Before the slaves can set out the plan is betrayed and Douglass, fingered as the ringleader and a "long-legged mulatto devil," is sent back to Baltimore: "My master sent me away, because there existed against me a very great prejudice in the community, and he feared I might be killed" (311).

Auld's reaction is extraordinary. Surplus and/or unmanageable slaves were often

sold south. Maryland's brisk interstate slave trade would have made this a more likely fate: historian Barbara Fields describes the 1830s as "an especially active period of trading" and reports that "[s]ome 16 percent of individuals sold and just under 2 percent of the total slave population of the eight counties in 1830 were sold out of the state by their owners. An approximately equal number left the state involuntarily when their owners emigrated" (Fields 24). Indeed, Dickson Preston writes that fifteen members of Douglass's extended family -- including his sister, Sarah -- were "sold south" during his childhood (200). Auld's first intention is to send Douglass, "with a gentleman of his acquaintance, into Alabama" (Douglass, Narrative 311). Whether or not Auld was contemplating selling Douglass to this "friend" is unclear, although this may have been the case. At any rate, a deal of some nature falls through and Douglass is returned to Baltimore to learn a trade.

That Auld refuses to sell Douglass is evidence that some twisted tie of exploitation and affection existed between the two. Douglass's biographer William McFeely writes,

Whatever the tortured bond between the two, whether kinship or some other equally strong tie, Auld could not doom the boy, now grown to be a man--a person--about whom in his clumsy, tormented way he cared immensely. . . . Auld must have known that he would now lose Frederick--not into endless labor in a cotton field in the Deep South, but to the risks of Baltimore (56).

If Douglass and Auld shared some affective tie evidence of it had to be suppressed in Douglass's account. In the interests of the abolitionist cause, which Douglass's Narrative was to abet, there could be no shades of grey, no complexities which could serve to blur

the stark dividing line between good and evil, free and slave, exploited and exploiter.⁶

Whatever the Aulds may feel for Frederick does not allow them to forget that profit is an essential consideration. Within a year of his apprenticeship Douglass can, by his own account, command "from six to seven dollars per week" (Narrative 314). Counterbalancing this, however, is the very real possibility that this unsatisfied moveable property might take advantage of Baltimore's proximity to Pennsylvania and abscond with his person and his labour -- both of which belong to Thomas Auld. With profit, therefore, comes the risk that Douglass can evade the disciplinary gaze to which rural slave space such as Covey's farm is subjected: there was to be no owner-bound overseer in the byways and public spaces of antebellum Baltimore. Indeed, the city was a curious and increasingly uneasy amalgam of slave and free labour, mixing with dangerous promiscuity in one space.

To understand why this mixture was particularly dangerous one must understand the difference between the two systems. In Wage Labour and Capital (1849), Marx and Engels explain that the free labourer *sells* his/her labour for money: "By giving him [the labourer] two francs [per day], the capitalist has given him so much meat, so much clothing, so much fuel, light, etc. in exchange for his day's labour" (201). Labour is thus a

⁶ Douglass's Life and Times provides evidence of an emotional attachment, however distorted, between master and slave. Auld, on his deathbed, tells the now famous Douglass that the former fugitive was "too smart to be a slave, and had I been in your place, I should have done as you did." Douglass, in turn, tells Auld, "I did not run away from *you* but from *slavery*," an expression of regard which he could not have made in his abolitionist, antebellum narratives (Douglass, Life and Times 877).

commodity exchanged by the labourer for other commodities. In an economy which depends upon slave labour this is not the case:

Labour was not always wage labour, that is, *free* labour. The *slave* did not sell his labour to the slave owner, any more than the ox sells its services to the peasant. The slave, together with his labour, is sold once and for all to his owner. He is a commodity which can pass from the hand of one owner to that of another. *He is himself* a commodity, but the labour is not *his* commodity (203).

Wage Labour and Capital implies that an economy operates with either one system or the other. But Baltimore -- and, to a lesser extent, the rest of Maryland -- operated with *both* systems simultaneously. In Gardner's shipyard, where Douglass was initially hired as an apprentice, slaves and free blacks worked alongside free whites in a work space where both slave and free labour intermingled. Sharing the same occupation, space and, in some cases, the same "free" (though highly circumscribed) status put African Americans, always at the bottom of the South's rigid, racialized hierarchy, on an equal footing with whites who were accustomed to blacks' institutionalized inferiority. As the antebellum period wore on, periods of economic downturn caused black and white labourers to compete with each other. Conflict was inevitable and Douglass soon became involved in a "horrid fight" with four white apprentices.

The facts of the case were these: Until a very little while after I went there, white and black ship-carpenters worked side by side, and no one seemed to see any impropriety in it. All hands seemed to be very well satisfied. Many of the black carpenters were freemen. Things seemed to be going on very well. All at once, the white carpenters knocked off, and said they would not work with free colored workmen. Their reason for this, as alleged, was, that if free colored carpenters were encouraged, they would soon take the trade into their own hands, and poor white men would be thrown out of

employment (Douglass, Narrative 312).

Although this argument, "did not extend to [Douglass] in form, it did reach [him] in fact." The fight started once the white apprentices "began to feel it degrading to them to work with [Douglass]" (312). Douglass's formally inferior status is not enough to protect him from reprisals: his inferiority, like that of his free black counterparts, must be spatially expressed. Indeed, the very presence and the increasing number of those free counterparts made this imperative: white labourers feared that the economic equality of an increasing labour force of free blacks could, when coupled with shared space, lead to social equality as well. Given that free African Americans "outnumbered slaves by a ratio of five to one" in Baltimore during this period, the increasing anxieties of white labourers were well founded (Towers 172). Skilled slaves like Douglass only increased the economic threat. It was for this reason that even the boundaries between free whites and enslaved blacks must be clearly emphasized. To preserve both their economic status and their status as white men, the white shipyard workers must attempt to physically demarcate their workspace, the occupation of which will then serve to confirm and recreate their socio-economic positions. Like the rural slave patrols, which terrorized slaves who dared to move beyond the plantation at night, the apprentices police racial boundaries.

Unlike the slave patrols, however, the apprentices' violence is not officially sanctioned and, after he is beaten, Douglass appeals to Hugh Auld. By appealing to his present master Douglass returns once again to the paternalistic form which had caused him to appeal to Thomas Auld after he was beaten by Covey. Unlike Thomas Auld, Hugh

Auld proves to be sympathetic. He can, however, do nothing: although property damage and its attendant lost wages would entitle Auld to compensation, no black man can, and no white man will, bear witness in court against any white man accused of harming the slave. Although this would have been the case even in the rural St. Michael's, one may speculate that the limitations placed on Auld are indicative of Baltimore's economic system.

In the rural South the "paternalism of the masters toward their slaves influenced and was in turn reinforced by the relationship of the planters to middle-class and lower-class whites" (Genovese 91). Although the relationships between slave holding and non-slaveholding whites were too complex to be fully described by generalizations, it is true that many small farmers, day labourers, mechanics and other, poor whites of the rural South "depended to some extent on [the planter's] charity as well as on their patronage for such odd jobs as hunting runaway slaves" (92).

There were economic limits on most Maryland slaveowners' ability to dispense such patronage: by 1860 one half of Maryland slaveowners possessed only one slave (Fields 24). Still, no matter what their ability to dispense patronage or, conversely, no matter what their degree of dependence, personal ties within rural Maryland ensured that white men would be recognized as white men. Although planters despised some poor whites as "trash" the enlistment of the lower classes in the chief methods of delineating boundaries -- slave catching, patrols and overseeing -- established a certain solidarity.

It is this solidarity which is lacking when the white apprentices expel Douglass

from the shipyard. Although the apprentices are exercising their ability, as white men, to delineate boundaries they are doing so without the support and connivance of slaveowners like Hugh Auld. A man of modest means in a city where relationships were increasingly being defined by capitalist wage labour rather than patronage, Auld has no economic, personal or paternal relationship with the white apprentices of Gardner's shipyard. The white labourers were not dependent upon Auld for work or other forms of patronage and/or kinship (Auld is himself an employee in a shipyard belonging to Walter Price) which might have served to protect Auld's property. Their attempts to drive black workers out of the shipyard were not taken at his behest: on the contrary, such actions could signal class conflict, since they were a sign that Auld's own economic interests were pitted against the white labourers' need to maintain their superiority (and, just as importantly, their economic status) *vis a vis* the threatening encroachments of black labour. This is not to say that patriarchal relationships between whites ceased to exist in Baltimore; I would argue, rather, that wage labour arrangements could not help but affect them.

If the presence of two systems of labour affects Douglass's relationship with the other apprentices in the shipyard it also affects his relationship with the Aulds. In the Narrative Hugh Auld reluctantly agrees to allow Douglass to "hire [his] time," an agreement which includes "the following terms: I was to be allowed all my time, make all contracts with those for whom I worked, and find my own employment, and, in return for this liberty, I was to pay him [Hugh Auld] three dollars at the end of each week, find

myself in caulking tools, and in board and clothing." Expenses, including the payment to Auld, add up to six dollars a week. "This amount I was compelled to make up, or relinquish the privilege of hiring my time" (Douglass, Narrative 317).

By obtaining this privilege Douglass is effectively participating in two systems at once. Like the free labourer he sells his labour; he also works in the same space as the free labourer. His daily wage of \$1.50 buys, like Marx and Engels' hypothetical two francs, "so much meat, so much clothing, so much fuel, light, etc.," expenses which, in the slave system, are usually provided in some fashion for the slave by his owner (Marx and Engels 201). In spite of this, the labour that Douglass sells to the shipyard owner is *not* his -- he must "hire" it from his owner, to whom it belongs. Although Douglass could earn as much as nine dollars during a particularly busy week he notes that "six or seven" dollars is the norm. Most of the small gains he makes beyond his own subsistence are relinquished to Hugh Auld. Douglass later writes that "[t]his arrangement, it will be perceived, was decidedly in my master's favor. It relived him of all need of looking after me. His money was sure. He received all the benefits of slaveholding without its evils" (Narrative 317).

In spite of the scheme's obvious profitability, Hugh Auld's initial reluctance is understandable. Frank Towers writes that "[u]rban practices like slave hiring opened cracks in the discipline of slavery that educated Douglass in the possibilities of freedom and the injustice of slavery. . . . [M]any hired slaves [including Douglass] resided apart from their masters and lived like free blacks in almost all respects. This increased

autonomy made the remaining controls of slavery appear even more unjust" (170). Auld's reluctance to permit Douglass to hire his own time was directly related to the fear that increased freedom would lead to a breakdown of this discipline. The "discipline of slavery," as I have already mentioned, was largely based upon surveillance and there was no better way for a slave to legally evade this surveillance than by hiring his own time.

On Covey's farm, as on the Lloyd plantation, the field hands had occupied a clearly demarcated slave space. Hands slept and ate in the quarters reserved for them and performed their daily tasks in the field. As I have already argued, the field, like the quarters, the yard or any other space clearly associated with and occupied by slaves was the product of an economic system which required slave labour. It was, in part, the occupation of slave space which indicated slave status. Both Covey and the overseer Gore had policed the boundaries of this space, ensuring that slaves, as non-subjects, did not display an undue autonomy by moving beyond these boundaries. In Baltimore, however, Douglass's movement through public thoroughfares, his social life and his employment by a third party in a shipyard where free and slave labour mix freely preclude such surveillance. Although Douglass's progress is probably supervised by his employer, that employer is of his own choosing. The fact is significant for it is Douglass himself who, through this choice, influences the relay of disciplinary gazes to which he is subjected. On the plantation the surveying gaze of the absent master was substituted by that of an overseer, an extension of the master's gaze who was himself overseen. Although Douglass cannot dispense with the supervisory gaze of the shipyard owner he

can, where more than one site of employment offers itself, switch overseers at will.

The spatial ramifications of Douglass's ability to hire his own time become evident only a few months after the arrangement begins. Having made arrangements to attend a camp meeting ten miles away, Douglass, "detained by [his] employer," finds that prompt Saturday night payment of his wages to Hugh Auld would require him to relinquish his outing.

I therefore decided to go to the camp meeting, and upon my return pay him the three dollars. I staid at the camp meeting one day longer than I intended when I left. But as soon as I returned, I called upon him to pay him what he considered his due. . . .He wished to know how I dared go out of the city without asking his permission. I told him I hired my time, and while I paid him the price which he asked for it, I did not know that I was bound to ask him when and where I should go (Douglass, Narrative 318).

This response "trouble[s] Auld," who revokes Douglass's privileges. "[H]e turned to me, and said I should hire my time no longer; that the next thing he should know of, I would be running away. Upon the same plea, he told me to bring my tools and clothing home forthwith" (318). Auld's fears were well founded: historian Christopher Phillips writes that fugitive slaves used Methodist camp meetings "as a means of making good their escape." In 1840, two years after Douglass escaped, one Baltimore master offered a five hundred dollar reward for the return of his "Negro boy JOHN MURPHY, who left my premises on Sunday, 30th August, under the pretense of going to the Camp Meeting on the liberty Road, 6 or 7 miles out" (Phillips 136).

Although he complies with his master's orders, Douglass spends the next week in idleness. "I did this in retaliation," he later writes (Narrative 318). Although Auld does

not allow himself to strike Douglass (could he have heard of Covey's fate?) he threatens to find Douglass a job, an action which would once again subject Douglass to a relay of disciplinary gazes over which Douglass would have no control. To avoid this Douglass goes out and gets "employment of Mr. Butler, at his shipyard near the drawbridge . . . thus making it unnecessary for him [Auld] to seek employment for me" (318). To allay Auld's suspicions he promptly turns all of his wages over to his master. Three weeks later Douglass runs away. On September 3, 1838, having taken the name of Frederick Johnson, (he changes his name from Frederick Bailey to avoid being traced) he arrives in New York. "How I did so, -- what means I adopted, -- what direction I travelled, and by what mode of conveyance -- I must leave unexplained" (320). Douglass believes that such revelations could only block escape routes for other runaways. It is also true that his own flight is rather prosaic when compared to the daring escapes of Ellen Craft and her husband or to that of Henry "Box" Brown: Douglass boards a northbound train dressed as a sailor and carrying the papers of a free seaman. He reaches New York without incident.

It is only when Douglass crosses the Mason-Dixon line into Northern free space that he can officially claim for himself the position of subject. As a freeman the position is accorded to him and with it comes the right to establish the "natural" domestic space. Douglass makes it clear that he does this almost immediately: "Anna, my intended wife, came on; for I wrote to her immediately after my arrival in New York, (notwithstanding my homeless, houseless, and helpless condition,) informing her of my successful flight, and

wishing her to come forthwith" (321). According to the marriage certificate which Douglass reproduces in the Narrative, the two married on September 15, 1838, less than two weeks after his departure from Baltimore. They immediately set out for New Bedford, where Douglass hoped to find work as a ship's caulker.

Douglass's comparative reticence about his fiancée's existence -- the reader does not even know that he *has* a fiancée until he announces his marriage -- is puzzling. Biographer William McFeely writes that this reticence is understandable when one considers the mores of both Douglass's audience and Douglass himself. McFeely notes that, although Douglass could write openly about his affection for fellow slaves and would-be escapees Henry and John, propriety forbade any mention of the Douglass's premarital relationship. "[S]o ingrained was the [Victorian] assumption that women were the vessels of male lust that men's affectionate relationships with women other than relatives were not talked about publicly in polite society, except in the most general terms. Any richer discussion would have led immediately to the assumption that the friendship had not been chaste" (McFeely 66). Thus Anna Murray Douglass became a mere sign of her husband's newly achieved subjectivity. Five years Frederick's senior, she was a free black woman, a domestic servant whose whose wages probably financed his escape from Baltimore. Nonetheless, any details surrounding Anna's own struggle to be publicly recognized as a subject are not documented in the Narrative. Douglass cannot, or will not, reveal the extent of her oppression in Baltimore any more than he can reveal the limitations which their life in the free states would have imposed upon her. To do the

former would throw into question her chastity, since he has already made it clear that the oppression of black women included their sexual exploitation. Sexual purity was the required element for a woman's inclusion in the bourgeois domestic space. To question either it, or that space's restrictions, would threaten Douglass's own triumphal acquisition of the subject position. As a freeman he acquired a publicly recognized subjectivity, which allowed him to legally protect and maintain the domestic space in which his wife "naturally" belonged. That the ultimate cost of Douglass's subjectivity may have been Anna Douglass's domestic confinement is a possibility which is never discussed in any of Douglass's autobiographical work. To be fair to Douglass, however, it must be said that his wife never seemed to chafe against this confinement: unlike the pioneering feminists who later became her husband's friends, Anna Douglass remained as resolutely within the domestic sphere as her husband remained, just as resolutely, outside of it.

If discussion of his personal ties is forbidden, Douglass can only telegraph the meaning of his newly married state by commenting on the domestic life of Mary and Nathan Johnson who, as free black citizens of New Bedford, "lived in a neater house; dined at a better table; took, paid for, and read, more newspapers; better understood the moral, religious and political character of the nation, -- than nine tenths of the slaveholders in Talbot county, Maryland" (Narrative 324). It is Nathan Johnson who suggests that the former Frederick Bailey -- who has travelled under the name of Johnson -- take Douglass as a surname, a process of renaming which serves to further indicate Douglass's change in status.

The narrative proper ends, not with this displaced description of domesticity or his own renaming, but with Douglass's first, impromptu speech, given at an anti-slavery convention in Nantucket. "I felt strongly moved to speak, and was at the same time much urged to do so by Mr. William C. Coffin, a gentleman who had heard me speak in the colored people's meeting at New Bedford I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I desired with considerable ease" (326). The speech, which proved to be the beginning of Douglass's oratorical career, is also a final, triumphant indication of his acquisition of subjectivity. In St. Michael's a chattel did not have the power to address a public meeting -- even Douglass's attempts to hold public meetings with other slaves had been broken up. At Nantucket he is finally able to physically occupy the space accorded to those in possession of fully recognized subjectivity -- the public platform. That this platform and the attitudes of those who initially urged him to occupy it would ultimately prove to be confining was a realization which would prompt a rewriting of his autobiography and a rethinking of the part space and place had to play in it.

THREE

The Arena of Manhood: The Quest for Public Space in Frederick Douglass's My Bondage and My Freedom.

In 1855, ten years after the publication of the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Douglass published his second autobiography. My Bondage and My Freedom was not simply an updated retelling of his story; rather, it was both a formal declaration of his intellectual independence and, more to my purpose, a reassessment of the nature of slave space and free space which revealed a new appreciation for the importance of homeplace.

Well before he wrote the Narrative, Douglass knew that the Northern "free" space in which he had found himself was not entirely free: the persistent threat of recapture (increased by the publication of the Narrative, and assuaged only when his British admirers raised £150 sterling to buy his freedom) and his initial rejection at the New Bedford shipyards had told him that. Still, he had portrayed his Northern experiences positively, as if, by stepping onto the public platform of the anti-slavery convention that day in Nantucket, he was finally occupying a space in which he was publicly recognized as a subject rather than an object, an equal rather than an inferior. Although Douglass often claimed this privilege under duress -- he broke his hand while defending himself from a club-wielding mob in Pendleton, Indiana -- he appears to have entered into a charmed

circle, an interracial, fraternal, abolitionist community which acknowledged and sympathized with Douglass as an equal and made clear its acceptance by hiring him as a speaker. It was Douglass's occupation of the lyceum stage, the public forum of ideas and symbol of public life, which was the ultimate proof of his subjectivity.

And yet things were not as they seemed. The African American doctor and anti-slavery activist James M'Cune Smith, whose introduction to Douglass's second autobiography pointedly replaces the authorizing prefaces of Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison, wrote that "these gentlemen, although proud of Frederick Douglass, failed to fathom, and bring out to the light of day, the highest qualities of his mind. The force of their own education stood in their own way: they did not delve into the mind of a colored man for capacities which the pride of race led them to believe to be restricted to their own Saxon blood" (xxii). Douglass resisted this intellectual subordination, eventually rejecting Garrison's doctrine of moral suasion and its accompanying ban on political action for a more pragmatic political abolitionism. When Douglass let his change of views be known, his former mentors regarded him as an impudent ingrate. Once a warm friend, William Lloyd Garrison denounced Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe as an apostate -- a charge Garrison publicly repeated in The Liberator (McFeely 178).

Douglass's association, and eventual break, with Garrison is important because this change of views may in turn be linked to changes in his view of free space and slave space. The Garrisonians had argued that the American constitution was a pro-slavery document. Their argument was based, in part, on Article I, section 2, which stated that

"Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States . . . according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons." Although these "other persons" were not referred to as slaves, the meaning intended by the framers of the constitution, some of whom were slaveholders, was plainly enough expressed in the article's traditional interpretation. Joined in this unholy union with the slaveholding South, the free North was bound to protect pro-slavery interests: "The truth is," Garrison wrote in 1844, "our fathers were intent on securing liberty to *themselves*, without being very scrupulous as to the means they used to accomplish their purposes. They were not actuated by the spirit of universal philanthropy, and though *in words* they recognized occasionally the brotherhood of the human race, *in practice* they continually denied it. . . . *Why cling to the falsehood, that they were no respecter of persons in the formation of the government [?]*" (Documents of Upheaval 201).

According to Garrison, the only way the North could morally redeem itself was by dissolving the union, for only then would it truly rid itself of the spirit of compromise which prompted Northern politicians to sacrifice the rights of fugitive slaves in the interest of preventing, or at least postponing, a sectional crisis. Since the North was bound, even before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, to protect the South in the event of a servile insurrection, the American Anti-Slavery Society and its affiliates resolved neither to "swear to support the Constitution . . . [nor] to throw a ballot for any office under the

State or United States Constitution, which requires such [an] oath" (Documents of Upheaval 206).

The depiction of slave space and free space in Douglass's 1845 Narrative was greatly influenced by the Garrisonian doctrine of disunionism. In a bombastic prefatory letter for the book, Wendell Phillips wrote:

Go on, my dear friend, till you . . . shall stereotype these free, illegal pulses into statutes; and New England, cutting loose from a blood-stained Union, shall glory in being the house of refuge for the oppressed; -- till we no longer merely "*hide* the outcast," or make a merit of standing idly by while he is hunted in our midst; but, consecrating anew the soil of the Pilgrims as an asylum for the oppressed, proclaim our *welcome* to the slave so loudly, that the tones shall reach every hut in the Carolinas, and make the broken-hearted bondman leap up at the thought of old Massachusetts (Phillips, Narrative 255) .

Garrison's accompanying exhortation had been even more blunt: "NO COMPROMISE WITH SLAVERY! NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS!" (Garrison, Narrative 251).

Although Douglass experienced discrimination there, he portrayed the North as a refuge, showing, as Wendell Phillips exhorted him, "whether, after all, the half-free colored man of Massachusetts is worse off than the pampered slave of the rice swamps!" Indeed, it could be argued that the Narrative's glowing account of the North was, in part, an anticipation of a truly free space, which could come about when the North finally severed its ties with the blood-stained slave space that was the South. In 1847, two years after his Narrative was published, Douglass still advocated disunion, telling an audience in Norristown, Pennsylvania: "I welcome the bolt whether it come from Heaven or from Hell, that shall sever this Union; that shall strike to the ground the system based upon it;

we must be uncompromising; we must denounce all that falls short of this point" (Papers 1: 86).

Once he assumed the helm of his own newspaper, however, Douglass's increasing contact with opposing views eventually convinced him of the disadvantages of the Garrisonian argument. James M'Cune Smith's introduction quoted his eventual conclusion: "The Garrisonian views of disunion, if carried to a successful issue, would only place the people of the north in the same relation to American slavery which they now bear to the slavery of Cuba or the Brazils" (Smith, My Bondage and My Freedom xxvi). If disunion would remove the urgency of the slavery question it would also do little to ameliorate the position of the "half-free colored man of Massachusetts," who existed in a limbo which, while not officially slave space, was also too tightly circumscribed to be called freedom. In Smith's words, Douglass had escaped from "the depths of chattel slavery in Maryland . . . into the caste-slavery of the north, in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Here he found oppression assuming another, and hardly less bitter, form" (xx). A highly paid ship's caulker in Baltimore, Douglass was barred, as a Black man, from pursuing a similar job in Massachusetts. Even the American Anti-Slavery Society, which deplored Northern segregation, was not entirely free from race and class prejudices: while the aristocratic Wendell Phillips was angry that Douglass was denied a berth on a boat to New York, he privately recoiled from sharing so intimate a space as a bed with both black and white working class representatives of "the cause" (McFeely 94). A proud and sensitive man, Douglass could not help but notice the discomfort of his white

counterparts. If concern for the cause he represented had caused Douglass to downplay Northern prejudice in the Narrative, his oral lectures were more direct: "Prejudice against color is stronger north than south; it hangs around my neck like a heavy weight" (Papers, 1:5) Even in the nominally free space of the North, Douglass's subjectivity was publicly recognized only intermittently: he was not a chattel, but the marginal spaces set aside for him indicated that he was still the "other."

Disunionism would be no solution to the racial segregation that African Americans experienced in the North. Just as important, the Garrisonian emphasis on "moral suasion," which prohibited political action on the grounds that it was immoral to participate in a system based on a constitution which protected slavery, closed the door to political action. Ever pragmatic, Douglass was increasingly willing to use the tools at hand. Political action was a good way to put pressure on the slaveowner, and participation in the political system, Douglass now argued, was not immoral if one interpreted the constitution as he now felt it should be interpreted. Douglass now believed that the constitution was *not* a pro-slavery document and could, if properly interpreted, make the whole country a truly free space, in which all inhabitants would be publicly recognized as equals. Douglass based his argument on the constitution's preamble, which stated that the document was designed "to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty" for the country as a whole. Now in agreement with political abolitionists such as Gerrit Smith, Douglass "distinguished between the text of the constitution and the

traditional interpretation of its meaning." T. Gregory Garvey has pointed out that this was "a new mode of constitutional interpretation, a mode which ignored reference to the well-known intentions of the framers and found the meaning of the Constitution exclusively in the text" (232). The text of the preamble unequivocally promises liberty within the space of the "more perfect union": a truly free space.

The discrimination directed against northern blacks, coupled with the stringency of the Fugitive Slave Law, which legally bound Northerners to return runaways to their owners, meant that the depiction of the North as a free space was no longer appropriate. As William L. Andrews has pointed out, "the world of 'freedom' loses its plenary status" in My Bondage and My Freedom. Freedom -- or, more appropriately here, free space -- "encompasses all the protagonist seeks" in the Narrative. "But by 1855 Douglass realized that before freedom had beckoned him there had lain within him the hunger for a home, whetted by his bittersweet memory of his grandmother's 'circle' with him at the center" (Andrews, To Tell a Free Story 219). In the Narrative homeplace had scarcely mattered, since, located in slave space and publicly unrecognized, it was ultimately under the command of the master. In My Bondage and My Freedom, however, Douglass chose to examine the way in which homeplace, a refuge within the confines of slave space, provided him with the subjectivity which the South denied and the segregated North only nominally offered.

This represents a significant change from Douglass's previous autobiography. The homeplace had been suppressed in the Narrative, perhaps because, at the time of writing,

Douglass primarily linked the recognition of his subjectivity to both official recognition of his place as the head of his household and, more importantly, to the ability to step onto the stage of a public meeting house and participate in the public sphere, an event which would not have occurred in the South. However, the triumphal entry into the public space which had concluded the Narrative is a continuing struggle in My Bondage and My Freedom as the embattled Douglass, having been fostered by the homeplaces which had affirmed his self worth, continues to seek the public recognition accorded to his white counterparts outside of the domestic circle. Recognition of his subjectivity, therefore, does not only include the recognition of his right to form a household of his own: it also includes the right to leave the domestic sphere for the public one, an action synonymous with manhood.

In the earlier Narrative the homeplace is passed over in a single sentence: "I had always lived with my grandmother on the outskirts of the plantation, where she was put to raise the children of the younger women" (Douglass, Narrative 259). The slaves' right to an independent domestic space was not recognized, making any discussion of the possibility of homeplace irrelevant. This omission implies that any homeplace which can be subjected to the will of the master was not a homeplace at all--it was merely a part of slave space. In My Bondage and My Freedom, however, Douglass's extensive description of his grandmother's active care rectifies this earlier omission of homeplace, an omission which bell hooks has criticized in her essay on the subject (hooks 44-45).

Celebrating homeplace as an important site of black subjectivity and resistance to

oppression, hooks' criticism centres on the Narrative's brief description of Douglass's mother who, in an effort to maintain an already tenuous relationship with her infant son, "made her journeys to see me in the night, traveling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. . . . She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone" (Narrative 256). In spite of this, Douglass then wrote that he had never "enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care" (256).

Hooks disagrees with Douglass, arguing that "this mother, who dared to hold him at night, gave him at birth a sense of value that provided a ground work, however fragile, for the person he later became" (44-45). Harriet Bailey provided, however briefly, "a space where this black child was not the subject of dehumanizing scorn and devaluation" (44-45). The space within Harriet's encircling arms was, hooks argues, a temporary homeplace. His mother's actions "should have enabled the adult Douglass to look back and reflect on the political choices of this black mother who resisted slave codes, risking her life, to care for her son" (45). The fact that the Narrative largely omits the contributions Douglass's mother, grandmother and wife made to his sense of his own subjectivity is, in hooks words, "a dangerous oversight," since it ignores the role that black women have played in resisting oppression. Curiously, hooks does not examine Douglass's subsequent autobiographical writings to see how his depiction of home, and his recognition of the role of African American women in shaping that home, changed.

Because, as bell hooks has noted, "sexism delegates to females the task of creating

and sustaining a home environment" which is often the primary site of the homeplace, Douglass's recollection of that homeplace is inextricably bound up with recognition of women's roles in maintaining it (hooks 47). In spite of the grandfather's presence, it is Douglass's grandmother, "a woman of power and spirit. . . .marvelously straight in figure, elastic, and muscular," who is the main prop of the homeplace. Although Douglass was an ardent feminist (he was the only man at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention to vote in favour of women's suffrage) he still associated women with the home. In this he was in accord with many of his feminist counterparts: in her Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman (1837), for example, Sarah Moore Grimké, in advocating higher education for women, argued that the woman's "natural" role as nurturer made education necessary, since women had greater influence over children's minds than men. "This being the case by the very order of nature, women should be prepared by education for the performance of their sacred duties as mothers and sisters" (Grimké, Letters 49). The sentiment was not Grimké's alone: in Religion And The Pure Principles of Morality (1831), the African American feminist, lecturer and anti-slavery activist Maria W. Stewart, addressing herself to her fellow African Americans, wrote: "O, ye mothers, what a responsibility rests on you! You have souls committed to your charge, and God will require a strict account of you. It is you that must create in the minds of your little girls and boys a thirst for knowledge, the love of virtue, the abhorrence of vice, and the cultivation of a pure heart" (35).

In My Bondage and My Freedom, therefore, the grandmother's presence creates a

nurturing homeplace, which Douglass contrasts with the barrenness of the surrounding slave space. Douglass describes the slave space into which he was born as "a small district of the country, thinly populated, and remarkable for nothing that I know of more than the worn-out, sandy, desert-like appearance of its soil, the general dilapidation of its farms and fences, the indigent and spiritless character of its inhabitants, and the prevalence of ague and fever" (My Bondage 33). Tuckahoe, a "singularly unpromising and truly famine stricken district," is said to have derived its name from a long ago petty theft, "and is seldom mentioned but with contempt and derision, on account of the barrenness of its soil, and the ignorance, indolence and poverty of its people." The poor whites, he adds, are "indolent and drunken to a proverb" (34). In the Narrative Douglass's minimal description of his birthplace served as a means of identification: a slave, he was born in slave space. In My Bondage and My Freedom, however, his expanded description of Talbot county establishes a difference between the security of homeplace and the dehumanizing slave space in which it is located.

In contrast with the general population of poor whites, Douglass's grandmother is "held in high esteem, far higher than is the lot of most colored persons in the slave states. She was a good nurse, and a capital hand at making nets for catching shad and herring; and these nets were in great demand." A fisherwoman of some skill, she "was likewise more provident than most of her neighbours in the preservation of seedling sweet potatoes, and it happened to her -- as it will happen to any careful and thrifty person residing in an ignorant and improvident community -- to enjoy the reputation of having

been born with 'good luck'" (36). Superstitious neighbours believe that "Grandmother Betty's" very touch promises fecundity and she is "sent for in all directions" to help with the planting in exchange for a share of the crop. "[A]s she was remembered by others, so she remembered the hungry little ones around her" (35-36). In contrast with the sterile and desolate slave spaces, the homeplace is the site of fertility, nurturance and plenty.

Much like his contemporary Harriet Jacobs, who spent the first seven years of her life in her parents' home, the young Frederick initially has no inkling of his condition:

"Grandmother and grandfather were the greatest people in the world to me; and being with them so snugly in their own little cabin -- I supposed it to be their own--knowing no higher authority over me or the other children than the authority of grandmamma, for a time there was nothing to disturb me" (38). The cabin, built of "clay, wood and straw resembled -- though it was much smaller, less commodious and less substantial--the cabins erected in the western states by the first settlers" (37).

"First" settlement is implicitly connected with ownership of a designated space and this ownership, in turn, implies recognition of one's citizenship, one's personhood. By making such an explicit connection between the settler's cabin and the Bailey homeplace Douglass highlights both the African Americans' role in the country's development and the injustice which largely denied them their humanity and the fruits of their labour. In an 1849 speech Douglass had argued that such are their contributions that "the black people of this country are in fact the rightful owners of the soil of this country -- at least in one half of the States of the Union" (Papers, 2:165). While the American Colonization Society

proposed to resettle free African Americans on the African coast -- a project of ostensible benevolence -- Douglass vehemently opposed the scheme, insisting on the African American's right to both American citizenship and the fully recognized subjectivity which it entailed.

The young boy (known throughout his servitude as Frederick Bailey) recognized his condition only gradually: "Living here, with my dear old grandmother and grandfather, it was a long time before I knew myself to be a slave . . . as I grew, larger and older, I learned by degrees. . . that not only the house and lot, but that grandmother herself (grandfather was free) and all the little children around her belonged to . . . 'Old Master'" (Douglass, My Bondage 39). Even as he becomes aware of "the absolute power of this distant 'old master'" and his own immanent exile, he is still "a spirited, joyous, uproarious and happy boy, upon whom troubles fall only like water on a duck's back" (42).

In spite of these fond recollections, Douglass's description of the homeplace is not entirely celebratory. In the child's eyes, the cabin "was MY HOME -- the only home I ever had; and I loved it, and all connected with it" (44). As an adult, however, Douglass recognizes what he perceives to be its distortions. Even as "Old Master" allows Douglass's grandmother the right to maintain the independent domestic space which is the family's homeplace, he destroys family ties by separating children from their parents and siblings. In describing the situation Douglass writes, "My poor mother, like many other slave women, had *many children*, but NO FAMILY! The domestic hearth, with its holy lessons, and precious endearments, is abolished in the case of a slave mother and her

children" (48). Of course, Douglass *has* known the benefits of the homeplace--his grandmother has ensured that. In spite of his recognition of her role, however, Douglass ultimately reminds the reader that the homeplace is deficient, not only because it does not conform to the middle class ideal, in which the wife and mother occupies domestic space (symbolized by the hearth) and performs the "natural" role in childrearing, but because this deficiency is caused by slavery, which has the power to cut the tie between mother and child.

In spite of this, Douglass's attachment to his first homeplace was very real. His description of it makes it clear that he mapped out, and attached particular importance to, its dimensions: the mill pond, the well, the cabin, "[t]he old fences around it, and the stumps in the edge of the woods near it . . . were objects of interest and affection" (44). That the young Frederick should regard the objects which make up the homeplace's physical dimensions with affection is natural, for, as Yi-Fu Tuan has pointed out, place itself "is a special kind of object. It is a concretion of value, though not a valued thing that can be handled or carried about easily; it is an object in which one can dwell" (Space and Place 12).

At "Old Master's" behest, however, the grandmother takes seven-year-old Frederick by the hand and, "resisting . . . all my inquiring looks," leads him twelve miles through the woods from the homeplace to the Lloyd plantation, where "Old Master" is steward. She then slips away unnoticed, leaving an "almost heart-broken," "grieved" and "indignant" child behind her. In My Bondage and My Freedom it is this exile from the

homeplace, rather than the whipping of Hester, which "was, in fact, my first introduction to the realities of slavery" (50). In spite of its function as the site of nurturance, the slave's homeplace is also characterized by the permeability of its boundaries: as "the *firstling* of the cabin flock," the child is, nonetheless, "[b]orn for another's benefit" (45).

The space in which he finds himself is alien and, at first, unreadable: "Great houses loomed up in different directions, and a great many men and women were at work in the fields" (49). Eventually this confusion resolves itself into a highly hierarchized, closed space. The Lloyd plantation "is a little nation of its own, having its own language, its own rules, regulations and customs" (64).

It is far away from all the great thoroughfares, and is proximate to no town or village The children and grandchildren of Col. Lloyd were taught in the house, by a private tutor The overseers' children go off somewhere to school; and they, therefore, bring no foreign or dangerous influence from abroad to embarrass the natural operation of the slave system of the place. Not even the mechanics -- through whom there is an occasional out-burst of . . . indignation, at cruelty and wrong on other plantations -- are white men, on this plantation (62).

The plantation's produce is exported, and outside goods are imported, using the colonel's own boats, "every man and boy on board of which -- except the captain -- are owned by him" (63). Although Douglass neglects neither the beauties and comforts of the big house nor the various workshops and the windmill that delighted his child's eye, he describes the Lloyd plantation as something of an armed camp, where access and egress are carefully controlled and social hierarchies are carefully maintained. Captain Anthony, who owns nearly thirty slaves and three farms, does not socialize with his employer: "The

idea of rank and station was rigidly maintained on Col. Lloyd's plantation. Our family never visited the great house, and the Lloyds never came to our home. Equal non-intercourse was observed between Capt. Anthony's family and that of Mr. Sevier, the overseer" (78).

This attention to rank is attended by an equally careful delineation of plantation space. The overseer of "the Great House Farm," Mr Sevier, lives in "the little red house, up the road" -- well away from the homes of both his employer (Col. Lloyd) and his immediate supervisor (Captain Anthony). Douglass previously described the lavish exclusivity of the Lloyd garden in the Narrative; here he expands his description of the family's "elaborate exhibition of wealth, power and vanity." The lawn, traversed by a circular drive is, significantly, described as a "select enclosure" of "almost Eden-like beauty" surrounded by parks "where -- as about the residences of the English nobility -- rabbits, deer, and other wild game, might be seen" (67). The comparison to nobility is one which the Lloyds themselves may have made: as one of the first families of Maryland they were part of recognized "aristocracy". The family's position is underlined by its exclusive spaces, which include a private graveyard, whose monuments "told of the antiquities of the Lloyd family, as well as of their wealth" (68).

Douglass's master, Captain Anthony, lives in a less ostentatious manner in "a long, brick building, plain but substantial." The position of the Anthony home is a clear indication of Captain Anthony's status as steward: it "stood at the center of the plantation life, and constituted one independent establishment on the premises of Col. Lloyd" (66).

Radiating from this central point are the "barns, stables, store-houses, and tobacco-houses; blacksmiths' shops, wheelwrights' shops, coopers' shops." The slave quarters -- including "the Long Quarter" and several other buildings of varying size -- are "scattered around the neighborhood." As befitting their position as chattel and instruments of labour, the domestic spaces of the slaves are intermingled with the barns, work shops and tool sheds.

In his first narrative, Douglass explicitly compared slaves to livestock. He examined the slaves' enforced "animality" and the space which was used to create, reinforce and contain it. Douglass did not, however, examine the hierarchies which existed among the slaves themselves. In My Bondage and My Freedom Douglass talks about these hierarchies, which create complexities within both the owner's domestic space (as we shall see in Harriet Jacobs's narrative) and in the "slave" space of the larger plantation.

In spite of its exclusivity, the Lloyd family mansion and its environs was necessarily permeable, since this space had to be maintained by the very slaves prohibited from enjoying it. Unlike the field slaves, who are relegated to the barn-like indiscriminacy of the quarters, the house servants who maintained these exclusive spaces "constituted a sort of black aristocracy on Col. Lloyd's plantation":

[They were] discriminately selected, not only with a view to their industry and faithfulness, but with special regard to their personal appearance, their graceful agility and captivating address They resembled the field hands in nothing, except in color, and in this they held the advantage of a velvet-like glossiness, rich and beautiful [I]n dress, as well as in form and feature, in manner and speech, in tastes and habits, the distance between these favoured few, and the sorrow and hunger-smitten multitudes of the quarter and the field was immense (109).

This demarcation between field slaves and house slaves was not absolute in the households of the majority of slaveholders, most of whom were of more modest means. It is also true that the slaves' work assignment depended upon the slaves' life cycle: Deborah Gray White notes that pregnant women, for example, were given "light" household work such as spinning (114). Douglass's account, however, makes it clear that any definite separation denoted a recognizable class difference. Although Douglass's depiction of the more fortunate conditions surrounding some house slaves initially seems to undermine his account of general ill-treatment, it also accounts for the positive impressions of slavery published by visiting Northerners. In any case, this image of relative privilege is cancelled out by his later account of the Baltimore slaveowner, Mrs. Hamilton, who abused and starved her two house slaves (Douglass, My Bondage 149)

Perhaps because he could only observe from afar during this period of his boyhood, Douglass does not, or cannot, describe the effects domestic service had upon the slaves' ability to build and maintain a homeplace of their own. Presumably, the quasi-independence which marked his grandmother's domestic space could not be obtained by those slaves who constantly occupied the same domestic space as the master. They, even more than the field slaves, would, by their very proximity, have come under the master's all-enveloping patriarchal wing: though chattels, they were more often deemed to be "part of the family" and, as such, had a more complex relationship with their owners than the field hands did.

If the homeplace afforded slaves some recognition of their subjectivity, so, in a

limited way, could the domestic space of the master: Annalucia Accardo and Alessandro Portelli have pointed out that the relationship between the slaveowner and a domestic slave could have psychological privileges as well as material ones: "In a system that did not recognize their full personal identity or grant them distinct social roles, for some slaves obtaining the master's trust became a path to achieving self-esteem and a limited but real visibility and presence" (83). For this reason, consciousness of one's own oppression could be intertwined with a desire to please the oppressor. As I shall point out later, Douglass himself, as a domestic servant, could not avoid such contradictions and the resultant ambivalence which they provoked.

During his early youth, however, the young Frederick viewed the privileged house slaves and the rarefied delights of Wye House from afar: as the property of Col. Lloyd's steward he would scarcely have been able to enter its "sacred precincts." The Anthonys lived in a more modest, though comfortable house. "The family of old master consisted of two sons, Andrew and Richard; his daughter, Lucretia, and her newly married husband, Capt. Auld. This was the house family. The kitchen family consisted of Aunt Katy, Aunt Esther, and ten or a dozen children, most of them older than myself" (Douglass, My Bondage 78). Although he was closely related to the other slave children, Douglass could not accurately keep track of their ever-changing number: the master, whose most valuable property consisted of "thirty *'head'* of slaves. . . could afford to sell one every year" (78).

Although the kitchen's primary purpose is to produce food for the "house family" it also serves, as many kitchens did, as the slaves' "quarters." Douglass does not specifically

say whether or not the kitchen is independent of the house, although his language suggests that it is. This was not uncommon; as John Michael Vlach points out, this arrangement had the practical purpose of separating the master and his family from the heat and bustle of the kitchen and the *de facto* effect of emphatically demarcating the separation between the servers and the served (Vlach 43).

If "Old Master" inspires the young Frederick's awe, it is "Aunt" Katy, the cook in charge of this kitchen space, who most makes her power felt. The title of "aunt" is one of respect rather than kinship: Aunt Katy "had a strong hold on old master -- she was considered a first rate cook, and she really was very industrious" (Douglass, My Bondage 74). As I have already noted, it is this ability to curry the master's favour which accords the domestic slave a limited, though hardly official, recognition of his/her humanity. Even as Captain Anthony officially denies this subjectivity he simultaneously recognizes it, however implicitly, by placing Aunt Katy in a position of trust. With the exception of field work, which is left to the overseer, Anthony must superintend most aspects of production and distribution (including import and export) on the Lloyd plantation. "Thus largely employed, he had little [sic] time . . . to interfere with the [slave] children individually. . . .When he had anything to say or do about us, it was said or done in a wholesale manner. . . .leaving all minor details to Aunt Katy" (74). The ultimate sign of the master's tacit recognition is the fact that she "was the only mother who was permitted to retain her children around her" (74).

Aunt Katy's almost absolute domination of the kitchen and its immediate environs

suggests that she is in the position to maintain a homeplace. Although the kitchen, like all of the domestic spaces inhabited by slaves, is ultimately under the control of the master, the fact that he has willingly relinquished this control gives her the power to create a space of nurturance and emotional validation of the kind that Douglass had been used to in his grandmother's cabin. Aunt Katy, however, does not take advantage of this opportunity. "Aunt Katy was a woman who never allowed herself to act greatly within the margin of power granted to her, no matter how broad that authority might be" (74). Douglass's description of Aunt Katy as "[a]mbitious, ill-tempered and cruel" makes it clear that she has been co-opted by the slave system: she is, as I noted in the previous chapter, part of a disciplinary relay, through which the master can assert his control. Her domain, the Anthony kitchen, becomes the homeplace's antithesis, the site of deprivation and oppression. While Douglass's grandmother actively produced food for the children around her, Aunt Katy "was often guilty of starving [the young Frederick] and the other children, while she was literally cramming her own" (75). While this partiality shows that she is "not destitute of maternal feeling," even this is tempered by cruelty: in a fit of anger, she hits her son with a butcher knife (75). Instead of being a refuge from the wider slave space, the Anthony kitchen, under the slave system's agent, brutalizes and distorts the ties of kinship and maternity.

And yet, if the kitchen is the polar opposite of the homeplace, its effects can be undermined. Although the young Frederick continues to be "at the mercy of the sable virago, dominant in my old master's kitchen," the site of his deprivation can, however

briefly and tentatively, be turned into a homeplace. Threatening to "starve the life out of" little Fred for some childish offence, Aunt Katy deprives him of food for a day. At dusk his visiting mother, who has walked twelve miles to see him, finds him eating the few kernels of parched corn he has surreptitiously shelled from an ear found on a kitchen shelf. "The friendless and hungry boy, in his extremest need. . .found himself in the strong, protecting arms of a mother; a mother who was, at the moment. . .more than a match for all his enemies" (56). The mother gives her child a ginger cake "in the shape of a heart" and the abusive Aunt Katy "a lecture which she never forgot" (56). Frederick's mother threatens to complain to Captain Anthony, "for the latter, though harsh and cruel himself, at times, did not sanction the meanness, injustice, partiality and oppressions enacted by Aunt Katy in the kitchen" (56). For a brief period Aunt Katy is deposed and the site of Frederick's deprivation becomes one of love and nurturance. The effect that this brief protection has upon the young Frederick's psyche is profound: "That night I learned the fact, that I was not only a child, but *somebody's* child. . .I was victorious, and well off for the moment; prouder, on my mother's knee, than a king upon his throne" (56). In the Narrative Douglass had written that he knew nothing of a mother's care. In My Bondage and My Freedom, however, he takes pains to acknowledge her, and, specifically revising a statement in his previous narrative, remembers that this visit afforded him "a bright gleam of a mother's love, and the earnestness of a mother's care" (54).

Although the Anthony kitchen does not continue to be a source of nurturance and comfort, the young Frederick is resourceful enough to find succour elsewhere. When he

hurts his head in a fight with another boy and comes from Captain Anthony's married daughter, "Miss" Lucretia Auld: "she called me into the parlor, (an extra privilege of itself,) and . . . quietly acted the good Samaritan" (130). Miss Lucretia supplements this act of kindness with the occasional slice of bread and butter, although this latter effort sometimes requires a hint on Frederick's part: "When pretty severely pinched by hunger, I had a habit of singing, which the good lady very soon came to understand as a petition for a piece of bread." Her generosity "was a great favor on a slave plantation, and I was the only one of the children to whom such attention was paid" (131). As a child, Douglass saw Miss Lucretia as a "friend"; as an adult he downplays the attachment: "It is quite true that this interest [in Douglass's welfare] was never very marked" (131). In spite of this, Miss Lucretia's occasional and somewhat random kindnesses "taught me that she pitied me, if she did not love me" (130). Douglass returns this kindness with his gratitude: "I love to recall . . . any sunbeams of humane treatment, which found way to my soul through the iron grating of my house of bondage" (131).

The link Douglass makes between gratitude and his enslaved status is significant here, for it serves to remind the reader that any relationship between mistress and slave, benevolent as it may seem, is ultimately a tie formed for the purpose of the slave's economic exploitation. While Douglass uses this image of slave space to remind the reader of his former state, I would suggest that he also needs, at some level, to remind himself: much as he has rejected his own oppression, he can not help but feel some residual attachment to his oppressor. By recalling the punitive space of the prison cell

Douglass attempts to displace the parlor which, by becoming a site of nurturance and affection, created an emotional bond which encouraged the young Frederick to comply with his own enslavement.

Although he could only enter the parlour at Miss Lucretia's behest, her benevolence caused the young Frederick to associate it, rather than his grandmother's homeplace, with bounty and kindness. Even if Miss Lucretia's response to the slave child's "petition" was not a self-consciously ideological act, it was in keeping with the paternalism of the slaveowning South, which placed the slaveowner in the role of provider and protector. Indeed, Southern paternalism would have made the apparent absence of Douglass's father irrelevant: even if his master/father did refuse to acknowledge the slave as his son, he still, as a slaveowner, assumed the position of patriarch. As the author of The South Vindicated (1836) bluntly stated, "[t]he negro is a child in his nature and the white man is to him as a father." For evidence, The South Vindicated quotes the speaker of the Pennsylvania senate, who in spite of his northern, and therefore potentially abolitionist, antecedents, averred that

'[t]he feelings of the Southern slave towards his master are but little understood in the North. Born and brought up in a family, he has no affections beyond it. He eats his master's food and is his master's friend . . . and when his days are drawing to a close, he finds in his master a friend and protector, without resorting to the *tender mercies of an alms-house*' (Drayton 304).

In Douglass's own account, however, slaves *did* regularly form ties outside of the plantation; although Douglass describes ties of friendship, Deborah Gray White has noted

that slaves also frequently attempted to maintain ties to their spouses and blood relatives on other plantations, who were outside of the "family," or household, to which they belonged (154). The boundaries of the slavowner's household, however, were officially defined by who owned and profited from the slaves rather than the slaves' personal affections or bloodlines. The slaveowners recognized the slaves' presence with the quasi-familial rhetoric expounded above which, while it disguised economic exploitation and the fragmentation of slave families, also offered a limited recognition of the slave's humanity. Although Eugene Genovese argues that this implicit recognition of the slave's humanity was "a moral victory for the slaves themselves," this perpetual child status was unequal to the fully recognized subjectivity slaves sought in the homeplace. If the recognition of full subjectivity that took place within the homeplace was a subtle form of resistance, the slaveowner's paternal affection for, and recognition of, the fully grown "children" under his discipline and care, superseded the affects of the homeplace and ensured the slaves' compliance.

It is for this reason that Douglass takes pains to disassociate his residence at Captain Anthony's from the concept of homeplace. "My home at my old master's . . . was not home, but a prison to me; on parting from it, I could not feel that I was leaving anything which I could have enjoyed by staying," he writes (Douglass, *My Bondage* 135). The declaration, however, produces a contradiction. Although there can be no doubt that as a child he dreaded both the tyrannical ministrations of Aunt Katy and his eventual subjection to the brutal discipline of the murderous overseer Gore, his child's eye view of

the plantation is not entirely negative: it is also "a most strikingly interesting place, full of life, activity and spirit" (65). More tellingly, "[t]he little tendrils of affection, so rudely and treacherously broken from around the darling objects of my grandmother's hut, gradually began to extend, and to entwine about the new objects by which I now found myself surrounded" (65). In retrospect, however, Douglass definitively denies the plantation the status of homeplace. While he acknowledges Miss Lucretia's intervention and the friendship of Col. Lloyd's youngest son "Mas' Daniel," this is not sufficient recognition of his subjectivity, since it does not alter his fundamental position as a slave. The young Frederick remains in the slave quarters, architecturally separated from his two allies.

Significantly, however, it is probably Miss Lucretia who takes steps to remove the young Frederick from the slave space of the Anthony kitchen yard. When it is decided that he is to go to Baltimore it is she who takes "a lively interest in getting [him] ready" to send to her brother-in-law's home on Alliciana Street (135). The Aulds' domestic space is -- or, at least, will seem for a time--the site of the first homeplace the young Frederick has occupied since he was removed from his grandmother's cabin. Although Douglass will acknowledge Miss Lucretia's other kindnesses, he does not acknowledge this one -- as he did in the Narrative, he persists in attributing his good fortune to Providence. To be grateful to a slaveowner for so fundamental a thing as the change in environment which ultimately allowed Douglass to become what he was would, perhaps, too emphatically enmesh him in the ties of mutual obligation which bound the slave to the slaveowner.

Still, he *does* become enmeshed, not in the least because the Aulds, having drawn

Frederick into their domestic space, fulfil their material obligations admirably:

Instead of the cold, damp floor of my old master's kitchen, I found myself on carpets; for the corn bag in winter, I now had a good straw bed, well furnished with covers; for the coarse corn-meal . . . I now had good bread and mush occasionally; for my poor tow-linen shirt . . . I had good clean clothes.

An errand boy and domestic servant, he is "really well off" (144).

The material advantages of the house servant are accompanied, as Accardo and Portelli point out, by distinct psychological advantages as well. Douglass unhesitatingly characterizes his relationship with "Miss Sophia" as familial: "I . . . soon learned to regard her as something more akin to a mother, than a slaveowning mistress" he writes (142).

If little Thomas was her son, and her most dearly beloved child, she, for a time, at least, made me something like his half-brother in her affections It was no easy matter to induce her to think and to feel that the curly-headed boy, who stood by her side, and even leaned on her lap . . . sustained to her only the relationship of a chattel. I was *more* than that, and she felt me to be more than that (143-153).

It is this quasi-filial relationship, this recognition of humanity, which makes the Auld home seem like a homeplace for Frederick and he, writing as an adult, does not deny it this status.

While Douglass remained a child there was no apparent conflict between his status as a slave and Mrs. Auld's evident determination to regard him "simply as a child, like any other child" (144). I have already noted that slaveowners, hypothetically at least, viewed the master/slave relationship as a paternal one. Although the Aulds did not legally own Frederick, providing for him was their responsibility. The grateful recipient of the Aulds'

kindness returned the favour with what labour he could (he was only eight years old) and, in the words of The South Vindicated, looked up to his "liberal and generous [master], and [his] amiable [mistress], with a feeling absolutely fond and filial" (78). According to the author of The South Vindicated, this was the relationship to which slaves were best suited: "Their intellectual inferiority, the absence of ambition in their character, their improvidence and want of a master to direct and sustain them, and the peculiar adaptation of their physical constitution to labour in a Southern climate, all combine to render their present the best possible condition in which they can be placed" (78).

What disrupts this quasi-filial relationship is the awakening of the intellectual capacities and ambitions of which Africans were thought to be so deficient. "The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the bible . . . soon awakened my curiosity . . . and roused in me the desire to learn" Douglass remembers (My Bondage 145). Although, as my discussion of Harriet Jacobs's narrative will show, slaveowners had ways of demarcating the slave's lowly status within shared domestic space, it appears that proximity, in this case, leads to the breaking down of the barriers between slave and free. Sophia Auld is a woman of humble origin and, as such, is unaware of the ways in which her status must be maintained in a shared domestic space. She begins to teach the young slave to read. Douglass's account of his mistress' lessons and Hugh Auld's subsequent prohibition does not substantially differ from that in the Narrative. "Master Hugh" proscribes any further lessons on the grounds that learning to read will unfit Frederick for the duties of a slave. That this prohibition serves as a form of spatial management is clear: in My Bondage and

My Freedom Douglass notes that he and the co-conspirators who join him in his first, unsuccessful escape attempt "all had vague and indistinct notions of the geography of the country." Knowledge of space is in the hands of the slaveholder, who "seeks to impress his slave with a belief in the boundlessness of slave territory and his own illimitable power" (281).

By ensuring that Frederick's intellectual capacity remains undeveloped, Auld also ensures that the master/slave relationship maintains its paternal character. Treated as "a thing destitute of a moral or an intellectual character," the slave is constantly overseen and guided as a child is guided (152). The slave's position, as a subordinate member of his master's household, is clearly and permanently fixed. While slaveholding paternalism recognizes the humanity which the slave system officially denies, it carefully contains that humanity in perpetual dependence, ensuring that slaves remain permanently attached to the master's household.

Even though Frederick will not be allowed this privilege of independence, his "pathway to knowledge leads diametrically away from home" (Andrews, To Tell a Free Story 224). His continuing emotional inclusion in the Auld family circle is predicated upon his acceptance of his slave status. The knowledge Frederick has gained through reading, however, precludes any such acquiescence. In a surreptitiously obtained school text called the Columbian Orator, he has read a short dialogue between a master and his escaped slave in which the master, "vanquished at every turn in the argument . . . generously and meekly emancipates the slave, with his best wishes for his prosperity"

(Douglass, My Bondage 167-168). The dialogue and other speeches praising liberty have an inevitable effect: "I had now penetrated the secret of all slavery and oppression, and had ascertained their true foundation to be in the pride, the power and the avarice of man" (159).

According to paternalism's concept of mutual obligations, Frederick's discontent made him guilty of the "basest ingratitude" and, not surprisingly, Sophia Auld became much more exacting with her charge. "I have no doubt that my state of mind had something to do with the change in the treatment adopted, by my once kind mistress toward me. I can easily believe, that my leaden, downcast, and discontented look was very offensive to her" (161). Significantly, however, he blames, not his former mentor, but the corrupting influence of slavery itself: "Nature had made us *friends*; slavery made us *enemies*" (161). While carefully acknowledging individual kindnesses granted by Lucretia, and later Sophia Auld, Douglass rejects the idea that he is obliged to relinquish his freedom to receive them. His quasi-familial ties to the Aulds, Frederick realizes, mask his own exploitation:

I had been cheated. I saw through the attempt to keep me in ignorance; I saw that slaveholders would have gladly made me believe that they were merely acting under the authority of God, in making a slave of me, . . . and I treated them as robbers and deceivers. The feeding and clothing me well, could not atone for taking my liberty from me (161).

Significantly, this realization and the resultant disruption in his relationship with Sophia Auld take place about the time Frederick reaches puberty. That his physical and intellectual development should coincide only emphasizes his rejection of a perpetual

child-like dependence.

William L. Andrews writes that the young slave's rejection of "the paternalistic social relationships offered him as a perverse substitute for community" leaves him with "an existential bereavement of community" (To Tell a Free Story 224-225). The Aulds' domestic space cannot, finally, function as a homeplace for Frederick because the limited recognition that the Aulds offer does not surmount the paternalistic and economic ties between master and slave, both of which demand his continued subservience and dependence. It is for this reason that Frederick must seek an alternative, a plausible substitute for the distorted homplace offered by the Aulds.

Feeling "the need of God, as a father and protector," he assuages his loneliness with religion (Douglass, My Bondage 166). This need, however, is not a spiritual capitulation and acceptance of the "delusion that God requires [slaves] to submit to slavery, and to wear their chains with meekness and humility" (159). Significantly, he is drawn to "the preaching of a white Methodist minister, named Hanson," who preaches a doctrine of spiritual equality. Hanson "thought that all men, great and small, bond and free, were sinners in the sight of God . . . and that they must repent of their sins, and be reconciled to God through Christ" (166). Conversion causes Frederick to "[see] the world in a new light . . . I loved all mankind -- slaveholders not excepted; though I abhorred slavery more than ever" (167). Whether or not this resolution to love the sinner and hate the sin enabled him to reconcile the unbearable tension between his quasi-filial ties to the Aulds and his position as an owned and economically exploitable chattel is unclear. What

is clear, however, is that his conversion does enable him to find a partial substitute for the Aulds' homeplace in which he can meet with his spiritual equal.

In search of guidance, Frederick becomes acquainted with "a good old colored man, named Lawson" who lives an exemplary life of perpetual prayer:

Uncle Lawson lived near Master Hugh's house, and, becoming deeply attached to the old man, I went often with him to prayer-meeting, and spent much of my leisure time with him on Sunday. The old man could read a little, and I was a great help to him, in making out the hard words . . . I could teach him "*the letter*," but he could teach me "*the spirit*," and high, refreshing times we had together, in singing, praying and glorifying God . . . He was my spiritual father; and I loved him intensely, and was at his house every chance I got (167-168).

Notably, Frederick receives this spiritual tutelage in Lawson's household -- a detail which suggests that he has found a homeplace outside of his master's domestic space.

Earlier in the text Douglass notes that the use of the terms "uncle" and "aunt" is a mark of "plantation *etiquette* . . . a mark of respect, due from the younger to the older slaves" (69). In this case, however, such a designation also indicates that the boy seeks to replace Hugh Auld with a father figure of his own choosing. Hugh Auld does not allow his wife to teach Frederick how to read because the slave "should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it" (146); Uncle Lawson "fanned my already intense love of knowledge into a flame, by assuring me that I was a useful *man* in the world" (169 emphasis added). While the boy's mentor does not encourage active rebellion -- he advises the young slave to pray for freedom -- his conviction that Frederick will become a preacher and performer of the Lord's work subtly subverts Hugh Auld's doctrine of

earthly submission and dependence. Lawson recognizes his protégé's manhood and his right, as a man and a subject, to take part in the public sphere, those activities -- social, political, religious -- carried out in public space. This was not the type of recognition whites accorded either slave or free African Americans. But if Frederick, as a slave, was excluded from the political and social life of whites, he could take his place in the well developed public sphere which African Americans carved out for themselves in the city.

Historian Christopher Phillips writes that, by 1830, "free people of color outnumbered slaves by well over ten thousand and constituted 78 percent of [Baltimore's] black population" (38). Although Nat Turner's rebellion increased white anxieties about all-black meetings (anxieties which later prompted the city to impose a ten o'clock curfew on free people of colour), this free population created any number of public forums in which the talented, though enslaved, Frederick could participate. The most impromptu of these were the shifting crowds which inevitably congregated around public monuments and milled through the public spaces of Baltimore. The city's fountains were the meeting places of African American women, while black hucksters congregated with their customers on street corners. Phillips writes that the "few slave residents . . . then lived in white homes, and drawn by the need for social congregation, they gathered in alleys and in streetcorners, as well as at the wharves, at Jones' Falls and at the courthouse" (150).

Lawson, however, had greater plans for his protégé: the city also boasted separate, African Methodist meeting houses. While most of these were under the control of white clergymen, who carefully preached a doctrine of submission, a few were

independent. In 1815, dissatisfied with the "negro pew" of the mixed mainstream Methodist churches of Baltimore, a former slave named Daniel Coker and a number of other dissatisfied African American Methodists rented a building and formed the African Methodist Bethel Society. Although initially unrecognized by the parent denomination, the congregation established ties with the first, fledgling A.M.E. church of Philadelphia. Coker, as minister, also opened a school and, taking advantage of the relatively tranquil state of race relations in Baltimore in the earliest part of the nineteenth century, published an anti-slavery pamphlet called A Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister (1810). Written in the form of a dialogue, it is similar to the one in Frederick's beloved Columbian Orator: "the Virginian is so overwhelmed by the African's sagacity that he agrees to liberate his own fifty-five slaves" (Phillips 132).

Daniel Coker eventually left for Liberia in 1820. In the meantime, the once relatively relaxed racial atmosphere of Baltimore had dissipated. The threatened rebellion of Denmark Vesey (1820) and the bloody insurrection led by Nat Turner (1831) had excited the anxieties of white authorities. In 1835 an anonymous contributor to a Baltimore newspaper pointed out that the black churches were "obvious vehicles for organized dissent and unrest" -- even though free black ministers were anxious to save their separate spaces by counteracting this impression (222). Still, as Christopher Phillips notes, "the church served as a springboard for social status within the black community" (123). While the Bethel society would only accept free black members, it was not improbable to suppose that someone of Frederick's obvious abilities would take his place

in the public sphere of the African American community.

"The advice and suggestions of Uncle Lawson," Douglass writes, "were not without their influence upon my character and destiny. He threw my thoughts into a channel from which they have never entirely diverged" (169). While Uncle Lawson's house serves as a homeplace it is also a training ground for a marginal public sphere. Indeed, the two are related, for it is this homeplace, rather than the Auld domestic space, that recognizes the full scope of Frederick's subjectivity, his potential to be a "useful man in the world" rather than a useful domestic servant.

With this encouragement Frederick turns the Aulds' domestic space to his own account. Left in charge of the empty house, he practices writing in Tommy Auld's discarded copybooks.

In addition to these opportunities, sleeping, as I did, in the kitchen loft -- a room seldom visited by any of the family, -- I got a flour barrel up there, and a chair, and upon the head of that barrel I have written, (or endeavored to write,) copying from the bible and the Methodist hymn book . . . till late at night, and when all the family were in bed and asleep (172).

Most obviously, the allocation of the attic room for Frederick's own use once again suggests the favour in which he was held: as fellow fugitive Harriet Jacobs pointed out in her own autobiography, some maidservants, on call throughout the night, often slept on the bare floor at the threshold of their mistress' chamber. What is most important here, however, is Frederick's subversive use of this space, which suggests the rebellious acts of writing Jacobs herself performed in her grandmother's attic crawlspace.

While Frederick's material comfort can scarcely be compared to the desperate

hardship that Jacobs endured (she spent nearly seven years in a cramped, dark and uninsulated space to escape from her master's sexual coercion) the act of using a hiding place to write invites a limited comparison. Already literate, Jacobs secretly wrote and posted letters to her master to convince him that she had escaped from his grasp to the North. She was literally writing herself, creating a free self whose subjectivity was publicly recognized in the free space of Boston. Moreover, by diverting her master's suspicion, the letters also eventually allowed Jacobs to escape from the crawlspace and the larger slave space of her home state to the free space of New York, thus becoming the self she had written. Although Douglass's tentative "pothooks" scarcely approached the sophistication of Jacobs's missives, he too was creating another self. Hugh Auld had taught him that "knowledge unfits a child to be a slave" and Frederick, through literacy, hoped to create a non-slave self. A few years later he attempted to escape by writing himself a "pass." When he finally did succeed in escaping, the ability to write his own story was absolute proof of his humanity, his intellectual ability and his, and other African Americans', right to the status of subject.

In spite of his covert rebellions, Frederick greets the news of Captain Anthony's death and the resultant valuation and division of slaves with more than a little trepidation. "Personally, my concern was, mainly, about my possible removal from the home of Master Hugh, which, after that of my grandmother, was the most endeared to me" (174). To be allotted to Captain Anthony's profligate son Andrew is "considered merely as the first step toward being sold away to the far south. He would spend his fortune in a few years, and

his farms and slaves would be sold, we thought, at public outcry" (176).

Frederick is not the only slave to dread this very real possibility of being sold:

The people of the north, and free people generally, I think, have less attachment to the places where they are born and brought up, than have the slaves. Their freedom to go and come . . . prevents any extravagant attachment to any one particular place On the other hand, the slave is a fixture; he has no choice, no goal, no destination; but is pegged down to a single spot, and must take root here, or nowhere. A slave . . . looks upon separation from his native place, with none of the enthusiasm which animates the bosoms of young freemen, when they contemplate a life in the far west There is no improvement in his condition *probable*,--no correspondence *possible*, -- no reünion attainable (176-177).

Separation from the homeplaces which the slaves managed to create in the slave quarters was a process which Douglass likens to a living death, for "going out into the world, is like a living man going into the tomb, who . . . sees himself buried out of sight and hearing of wife, children and friends of kindred tie" (177).

While this attachment to home remained unexplored in the previous Narrative, Douglass acknowledges here that slave space is also the site of homeplace: a factor which, as William Andrews has noted, places the slave's desire for freedom at odds with his attachment to home (Andrews 219). Indeed, in a public letter appended to My Bondage and My Freedom Douglass tells Thomas Auld that "[i]t is not that I love Maryland less, but freedom more. . . .The fact is there are few [escaped slaves] here who would not return to the south in the event of emancipation. We want to live in the land of our birth, and to lay our bones by the side of our fathers; and nothing short of an intense love of personal freedom keeps us from the south" (424). Although Douglass champions

freedom as much as ever, he now readily acknowledges the emotional complexities of slave space.

Much to his relief, Douglass is awarded to Miss Lucretia and her husband, Thomas Auld, who return him to the Baltimore household of Thomas' brother, Hugh. Shortly after he is welcomed back into this family circle, however, Miss Lucretia dies, making Frederick the property of her husband. Although this does not initially affect Frederick's status, the Auld brothers have a falling out a few years later and Thomas, who has remarried in the meantime, reclaims Frederick, who must return to the Eastern Shore. Frederick's "regrets at now leaving Baltimore, were not for the same reasons as when I before left that city, to be valued. . . .My home was not now the pleasant place it had formerly been" (183). He now recognizes that the Aulds' domestic space is slave space, rather than homeplace: the "influence of slavery" has created a barrier between himself and Mrs. Auld who, by withdrawing instruction from him, has confirmed his slave status. Her son, too, "was no longer 'little Tommy,' but was a big boy, and had learned to assume the airs of his class toward me." Frederick's "attachments," therefore, are "now outside of the family," for he has replaced Hugh Auld with "my dear old father, the pious Lawson" (183).

Although still in his mid-teens, Frederick seems already to have taken a place in the marginalized public sphere of African American Baltimore. As a slave and a perpetual dependent Frederick, unlike Tommy Auld, can never be "a big boy." He responds to slavery's perpetual infantilization, however, by assuming the adult role of teacher: his "attachments" are "to those to whom I *imparted* instruction, and to those little white boys

from whom I *received* instruction." Although his white counterparts, who tutored him in return for bread, would later move into the public sphere in which he himself could not participate, his efforts to instruct others suggests that he has become active in a community outside of his master's household -- a community which, though limited, recognizes his incipient manhood. Douglass, however, does not describe the nature of the community he left behind, perhaps because he feared that it would suffer reprisals for having harboured such a pernicious influence.

Douglass's description of the village of St. Michael's is reminiscent of his description of the barren slave space which surrounded his grandmother's cabin. While there are "a few comfortable dwellings in it," the village, comprised chiefly of wooden buildings that have "never enjoyed the artificial adornment of paint," wears "a dull, slovenly, enterprise-forsaken aspect" (183). Although the distinction between slave space and the master's own domestic space had been so blurred as to become non-existent in Hugh and Sophia Auld's house, it was clearly demarcated in the Auld household at St. Michael's. "There were four slaves of us in the kitchen, and four whites in the great house," Douglass writes. Thomas Auld had inherited the Anthony slaves who had been his former wife's portion. While greater wealth and numbers (Thomas' four slaves to Hugh's borrowed one) probably made the existence of a separate slave quarter of some kind both possible and necessary, this narrative also makes it clear that Thomas Auld and his new wife, Rowena, had a need to make their own superior status felt. "Capt. Auld was not a *born* slaveholder -- not a birthright member of the slaveholding oligarchy," Douglass

writes (191). "The luxury of having slaves wait upon him was something new to Master Thomas; and for it he was wholly unprepared" (192). Although Thomas Auld was sufficiently domineering, his lack of consistency, coupled with his insecure posturing, prompted his slaves to subtly undermine his authority. Frederick and his sister Eliza called him "Captain Auld" rather than "master" and Frederick, hungry for the first time since he had left the Lloyd plantation, pilfered food whenever he could. Unlike her predecessor "Miss Lucretia," Rowena Auld was anything but generous; the scanty amount of cornmeal she allowed the slaves sometimes forced them to round out their diet at the expense of other slaveowners. Douglass defends his petty thefts in My Bondage and My Freedom by arguing that "it was only a question of *removal* -- the taking [of the master's] meat out of one tub, and putting it into another; the ownership of the meat was not affected by the transaction As society has marked me out as privileged plunder, on the principle of self-preservation I am justified in plundering in turn" (189-190). I would suggest that such reasoning, scarcely consistent with the young man's professed Christianity, reflects the mindset of Douglass the anti-slavery activist and challenger of conventional moral codes rather than the hungry young slave who missed Baltimore and its full pantry.

Thomas Auld's household, as Douglass remembered it, had none of the trappings of home which had characterized Hugh Auld's house in Baltimore. The quasi-familial bond which he had shared with Sophia Auld had been replaced by Rowena Auld's emphatic insistence upon his non-subject status: she was "especially solicitous to have us

call her husband 'master'," Douglass noted. If Sophia Auld had had to learn that the young Frederick was a chattel, her status-conscious brother and sister-in-law had yet to learn the paternalism which implicitly recognized the slave's humanity. In Douglass's account Thomas Auld's insistent denial of the slave's personhood freed him from the unsettling ambivalence that characterized his feelings towards Hugh and Sophia Auld. To be treated as a child when he was a child had created powerful ties which were not entirely cut by his dawning realization that his manhood would never be recognized. Though he had "no extraordinary personal hard usage toward myself to complain of," the emphasis that Thomas and Rowena Auld placed on his chatteldom, coupled with their stinginess, allowed him to see the ties created by slavery for what they really were (201).

Even if Frederick's relationship with Thomas Auld was somewhat more ambivalent than he chose to portray it, he was betrayed by Thomas as much as he had been by Hugh and Sophia Auld. The Baltimore household's home-like space had seemed to promise him full recognition of his subjectivity--a recognition which was truncated by Hugh Auld's proscription of Frederick's reading lessons. Although Frederick did not have the same bond with Rowena Auld as he had with Lucretia, and later Sophia Auld, Thomas Auld's conversion also seemed to promise a recognition which was never delivered. "In the month of August 1833," Douglass writes, ". . . when I entertained more strongly than ever the oft-repeated determination to run away, a circumstance occurred which seemed to promise brighter and better days for us all. At a Methodist camp meeting . . . Master Thomas came out with a profession of religion" (193).

Douglass describes the spatial organization of the camp meeting where this event took place in great detail. "The ground was happily chosen; . . . a stand erected; a rude altar fenced in, fronting the preachers' stand, with straw in it for the accommodation of mourners. This latter would hold at least one hundred persons," he remembers.

In front, and on the sides of the preachers' stand, and outside the long rows of seats, rose the first class of stately tents. . . . Behind this first circle of tents was another, less imposing, which reached round the camp-ground to the speakers' stand. Outside this second class . . . of tents were covered wagons, [and] ox carts These served as tents to their owners *Behind* the preachers' stand, a narrow space was marked out for the use of the colored people. There were no seats provided for this class of persons; the preachers addressed them, "*over the left*," if they addressed them at all (193-194).

The carefully spaced ranks of tents and wagons indicate that the distinctions between class and colour are observed even in matters concerning the soul's salvation. Frederick uses space to obtain knowledge of the quality of his master's conversion by choosing the best vantage point available, "a sort of half-way place between the blacks and whites," to watch "Master Thomas" make his way to the straw-filled enclosure in front of the altar.

Presumably Frederick had entered just such a space when he had joined the Methodist church three years before. It is not clear if salvation was arranged in the same way that communion was, with whites going forward first. Kneeling in front of the altar, however, serves to spiritually equalize Thomas Auld and his slave: both are supplicants who desire salvation. Frederick, however, wants concrete evidence of Thomas Auld's conversion in the form of real recognition of this equality. "If he has got religion,' thought I, 'he will emancipate his slaves; and if he should not do so much as this, he will, at any

rate, behave toward us more kindly, and feed us more generously than he has heretofore done" (194). For Douglass, true Christianity is incompatible with slaveholding. The emancipation of his slaves would be the ultimate proof that Auld "is willing to give up all for God, and for the sake of God" (196). In support of this doctrine Douglass quotes the Methodist Discipline, which sets forth the tenets of the faith: "We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery; therefore no slaveholder shall be eligible to any official station in our church" (196).

The Discipline notwithstanding, Thomas Auld was accepted as a church member "*at once* and before he was out of his term of *probation*, I heard he was leading a class!" While the Auld household at St. Michael's became "literally, a house of prayer. . . *no more meal* was brought from the mill, [and] *no more attention* was paid to the moral welfare of the kitchen" (197). Thomas Auld's failure to emancipate his slaves is a major betrayal for Douglass, since it confirms his continued refusal to formally recognize the slave as his equal, thus marking him as a subscriber to what Douglass, in his earlier Narrative, had vituperatively termed the "corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land" (Narrative 326). Stressing the slaveholder's perversion of Christian values, Douglass follows up My Bondage and My Freedom's account of Thomas Auld's conversion with a description of the latter's abuse of a disabled slave named Henny. "I have seen him tie up the lame and maimed woman, and whip her in a manner most brutal . . . and then, with blood-chilling blasphemy, he would quote the passage of scripture, 'That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not

himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (201).

Certainly Thomas Auld's position of class leader and exhorter did not interfere with the slave system's policy of containment: Douglass reports that "at the house of Master Thomas, I was neither allowed to teach, nor to be taught. The whole community--with but a single exception, among the whites--frowned upon everything like imparting instruction either to slaves or to free colored persons" (199). The single exception was a man named Wilson, who asked Frederick to help him teach "a little Sabbath school, at the house of a free colored man in St. Michael's, named James Mitchell" (199). The group, as Douglass recorded in the earlier Narrative, met only three times before its participants were driven off by Auld and other Methodist class leaders. While Douglass takes pains to emphasize the innocuous nature of these religious meetings, he simultaneously highlights their revolutionary potential by inserting the name of Nat Turner, the rebel slave preacher of Virginia, into the text: "One of [Auld's] pious crew told me, that as for my part, I wanted to be another Nat Turner, and if I did not look out, I should get as many balls into me, as Nat did into him," he recalled (200).

This is not the first time Douglass refers to Turner. The young Frederick had been about thirteen at the time of the Turner-led rebellion of 1831 and "[though] the insurrection . . . had been quelled . . . the alarm and terror had not subsided" (165). It was around the time of Turner's execution (he was hanged, not shot) that Frederick was surreptitiously reading, thinking, and finally penetrating "the cumbrous ambiguity, practiced by our white folks" when they pronounced that unknown word "abolition"

(165).

Eric Sundquist writes that the deliberate insertion of Nat Turner into the text indicates an attempt to "[align] himself as closely as possible with Turner the political theorist rather than Turner the 'fanatic'" (To Wake The Nations 84). While Turner steadfastly believed that he was destined to be a prophet and that his rebellion was divinely inspired, the secular Douglass invites the reader to draw parallels between the two. Both slaves were literate. Turner's gifts led his parents to believe that he would become a prophet; Frederick's foster father assured him that he would become "a useful man in the world." Other slaves regarded Nat Turner, a preacher, as a leader; Frederick, also taking part in church activities, was increasingly being seen as one. Thomas Auld may well have believed, and Douglass does nothing to dissuade the reader from believing, that danger was immanent.

Thomas Gray, Nat Turner's self-appointed amanuensis, wrote that the publication of Turner's confession was "calculated . . . to demonstrate the policy of our laws in restraint of this class of our population and to induce all those entrusted with their execution, as well as our citizens generally, to see that they are strictly and rigidly enforced" (411). Much like Col. Lloyd's overseer Austin Gore, whose murder of the slave Denby Douglass remembered and repeated in My Bondage and My Freedom, Auld and his companions surveyed spatial boundaries in the interests of maintaining a separation vital to the continuance of the slave system. While Gore patrolled the bounds of slave space, Auld surveyed and forcibly defined both public space and the eligibility of its occupants.

Although, as a free man, James Mitchell was ostensibly entitled to his own domestic space, this space must not become a public space and site of an alternative public sphere. The public sphere was the exclusive province of white men. Allowing designated dependents and inferiors access to it, even in the form of an unsanctioned Sunday school meeting, potentially threatened the patriarchal hierarchy that was the very fabric of society.

It was Frederick's continuing acts of petty insubordination as much as the Sunday school episode which finally caused Hugh Auld to send the slave out "*to be broken*" by the small farmer and "negro breaker" Edward Covey. The move is a calculated effort to forcibly inure the slave to his non-subject status. In order to effect this Thomas Auld must remove Frederick from the shared domestic space, for the recognition there, limited though it is, has "spoiled" him. As a corrective, he is relegated to the fiercely disciplined controlled slave space of Edward Covey's farm. This transformation from quasi-familial half-brother and step-son into "a wild young working animal . . . to be broken to the yoke of a bitter and life-long bondage" illustrates the inherent contradictions of the slave system: the slave is a lesser, though still human, being, responsible for his actions, a child in need of his master's guidance; he is also, simultaneously, a chattel, livestock of intrinsic economic value which must be properly trained to be profitably exploited.

Covey's "breaking" methods crush Frederick's spirit. "I was completely wrecked, changed and bewildered," Douglass writes. "Everything in the way of kindness, which I had experienced at Baltimore; all my former hopes and aspirations for usefulness in the

world, and the happy moments spent in the exercises of religion, contrasted with my then present lot . . . increased my anguish." The abandonment of those inappropriate, public, "useful" aspirations which were above Frederick's social station may have been as much Thomas Auld's object as the attainment of the newly cowed slave's docility.

Once Frederick resists Covey, however, his ambitions revive. His victory over the slavebreaker is a psychological turning point: "it brought up my Baltimore dreams, and revived a sense of my own manhood. I was a changed being after that fight. I was *nothing* before; I WAS A MAN NOW" (246). But while Douglass exults in his manhood, he also steers carefully between two stereotypes: the Scylla of the black man's uncivilized ferocity and the Charybdis of his unmanly cowardice and docility. While his response to Covey is gendered -- acting in one's own defence is laudably manly -- his assertion that he fought only to defend, rather than revenge himself, is not threatening. Women, in order to be recognized as properly feminine, must respond differently, as my discussion of Harriet Jacobs's narrative will show.

The following year Frederick was hired out to William Freeland, a farmer who, though "fretful, impulsive and passionate . . . was open, frank, imperative, and practiced no concealments, disdaining to play the spy. In all this, he was the opposite of the crafty Covey" (257). Freeland was what was known as a good master and, under his relaxed dominion, Douglass recalled that "the dreams called into being by that good man, Father Lawson, when in Baltimore, began to visit me" (264). He once again began conducting a Sunday school for the benefit of his fellow slaves. Reflecting upon Auld's initial attempt

to break up the school, Douglass wrote that "[the] plea for this outrage was then . . . -- the danger to good order. If the slaves learnt to read, they would learn something else, and something worse. The peace of slavery would be disturbed; slave rule would be endangered" (266).

Douglass wrote that he did not "dispute the soundness of this reasoning": he himself had derived "the principles of liberty" from his beloved book, the Columbian Orator (266, 159). He shared "its eloquent orations and spicy dialogues, denouncing oppression and slavery" with the friends who were his pupils. In spite of Thomas Auld's precautions, Frederick had entered an alternative public sphere: "The fact is, I here began my public speaking" (275). By placing an increased emphasis upon these youthful attempts, Douglass makes it clear that he was in fact serving an apprenticeship which fitted him for the very public sphere from which he was so rigorously debarred. After an unsuccessful escape attempt he was sent back to Baltimore, where he would complete his surreptitious, or at best barely tolerated, apprenticeship.

Whatever Frederick's aspirations, the return to Hugh and Sophia Auld's domestic space placed him once again in a position of dependence. Although he, like Tommy Auld, his former charge, had physically matured, he could not move beyond a child-like state. Tommy "could grow, and become a MAN; I could grow, though I could *not* become a man, but must remain, all my life, a minor--a mere boy" (307). Paradoxically, however, Frederick, like all slaves, was burdened with significant financial responsibilities. Trained as a ship's caulker, he earned as much as six or seven dollars a week, all of which had to

be turned over to his master. After some dispute, Hugh Auld reluctantly granted Frederick the privilege of "hiring his time" at three dollars a week. In addition to paying for this privilege, Frederick provided his own tools, clothes and board. Although the trade was dependent upon dry weather, the three dollars had to be paid, rain or shine.

In spite, or rather, because of this, Frederick managed to continue his public activities. The master of his own time, he was free from the restrictions of slave space and free "to increase my little stock of education."

I had, on the Eastern Shore, been only a teacher, when in company with other slaves, but now there were colored persons who could instruct me. Many of the young calkers could read, write and cipher. Some of them had high notions about mental improvement; and the free ones, on Fell's Point, organized what they called the "*East Baltimore Mental Improvement Society*." To this society, notwithstanding it was intended that only free persons should attach themselves, I was admitted, and was, several times assigned a prominent part in its debates. I owe much to the society of these young men (319).

Eventually, however, Thomas Auld decided that this independence was becoming too dangerous and revoked Frederick's privileges, an act which prompted the slave's second escape attempt.

After what he later described as a "bold and perilous" journey Douglass, now "Frederick Johnson," arrived in New York. "The dreams of my childhood and the purposes of my manhood were now fulfilled. A free state around me, and a free earth under my feet! What a moment this was to me!" (336). His joyful accession to what he then believed to be free space was soon tempered a by fearful realization of that accession's tenuousness: knowing that he was subject to recapture, "I was soon taught

that I was still in an enemy's land" (337). Nonetheless, he avoids being recaptured and soon establishes a home of his own.

As a slave, Frederick's "home" with Hugh and Sophia Auld had been characterized by his own continuing, enforced dependence, a pseudo-filial relationship which had masked his own exploitation. In New Bedford, however, the newly named Douglass establishes, for the first time, an independent home of his own. "The thoughts -- 'I can work! I can work for a living I have no Master Hugh to rob me of my earnings' -- placed me in a state of independence, beyond seeking friendship or support of any man" (349). When racism prevented him from pursuing his former trade as a ship's caulker he "hired out for nine dollars a month; and out of this rented two rooms for nine dollars per quarter, and supplied my wife -- who was unable to work -- with food and some necessary articles of furniture" (350).

Although it could be said that the two rented rooms are a recovery of the original homeplace (the grandmother's cabin), Douglass's description of the new homeplace focusses on his own ability to provide for his family's material needs, rather than the woman's vital role in providing an atmosphere of nurturance. This omission makes his account of this new homeplace curiously empty: as in his previous Narrative, Anna exists only as a symbol of her husband's newly acquired status. Although she could not work the first winter in New Bedford (Douglass's Victorian reticence prevents him from mentioning that she was already pregnant), Rosetta Douglass Sprague later remembered that her mother "had brought with her sufficient goods and chattel to fit up comfortably two

rooms" (95). The household items that Anna Douglass had bought on her housemaid's salary included clothing, a feather bed with pillows, dishes, bed linen and cutlery -- all evidence of great thrift and resourcefulness. They are also evidence that Douglass's proud claim -- that he was at once able to provide for his family's material needs -- was suspect. Although Anna bound shoes and held other jobs to sustain the family while Douglass was in Europe, her husband remains silent about her activities, chiefly because his claim to racial equality requires him to step into the role of patriarch, a role which demands that the man be the family's breadwinner.

While she supported her family, Anna also made the home a refuge when the Douglasses moved to Rochester, New York, where "[p]rejudice in the early 40's . . . ran rampant" (Sprague 97). Still, in spite of her husband's decision to recognize the role of his grandmother and mother in providing a homeplace for him, his wife's contribution warrants only a footnote, a reference in material appended to My Bondage and My Freedom. In "Letter to His Old Master," a public letter addressed to Thomas Auld that was first published in 1848, Douglass writes: "So far as my domestic affairs are concerned, I can boast of as comfortable dwelling as your own. I have an industrious and neat companion and four dear children" (My Bondage and My Freedom 426). Even this reference refers more to Douglass's position in the public sphere than it does to his wife's role in providing a homeplace. Why, after acknowledging the contributions of his mother and grandmother, does Douglass continue to omit his wife?

The most obvious reason is that Douglass's own status within the homeplace had

changed. In the first homeplace he was a child under his grandmother's tutelage, who believed himself to be -- although he legally was not -- her dependant. The parental role had been usurped by the master and no slave was ever able to legally assume it. With marriage and freedom, however, Douglass could now step into his "natural" gender and age-specific role as head of the household. Rosetta Douglass Sprague later indicated that her parents' marriage was fairly conventional: "Father was mother's honored guest. He was from home so often that his home comings were events that she thought worthy of extra notice Every thing was done that could be to add to his comfort" (Sprague 98). As important as this traditional role was, however, it was no substitute for recognition within the public sphere.¹

¹ Scandal may also have prevented Douglass from writing about his marriage. His opinion on the Constitution caused a bitter break with Garrison, a break which became an open feud when an unmarried, English abolitionist named Julia Griffiths began to work with Douglass in his newspaper office. A clever manager, Griffiths made the paper financially viable while helping Douglass with his editorial duties. She moved into the Douglass house and walked with Douglass to the office each day. Their decision to fraternally share domestic and work space scandalized both the abolitionist community and the public at large, and Douglass was beaten by a group of white men when he walked with Julia and her sister in public. While Douglass and Griffiths stoutly tried to ignore salacious, and increasingly vicious, innuendo, William Lloyd Garrison, who had begun to publish excerpts from Frederick Douglass's Paper in The Liberator's "Refuge of Oppression" column, made a nasty allusion to a woman who caused "much unhappiness" in the Douglass household. Douglass was incensed by Garrison's efforts to drag "a man's domestic affairs before the public" and The Liberator eventually published a letter, ostensibly signed by Anna Douglass, stating that "It is not true, that the presence of a certain person in the office of Frederick Douglass causes unhappiness in his family" (Liberator, December 16, 1853). The scandal eventually forced Julia Griffiths to return to England. My Bondage and My Freedom, published only two years after The Liberator incident, does not mention her name. Twenty-five years would pass before Douglass, in his final autobiography, The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, could decorously

While Douglass struggled to survive that first winter in New Bedford, he had not forgotten his aspirations. Nathan Johnson, who helped the Douglasses the first winter in New Bedford, "told me [Douglass] that there was nothing in the constitution of Massachusetts to prevent a colored man from holding any office in the state" (347). While the observation seemingly indicates that Douglass now occupies a free space, it actually highlights that "free" space's restrictions. Other Northern states did not allow African Americans to vote. Shortly after he was hired as a speaker for the American Anti-Slavery Society, for example, Douglass joined others in protesting the proposed adoption of a new state constitution for Rhode Island, which would have extended the vote to all white males while denying it to their African American counterparts.

Although he did not run for office, Douglass rapidly became a part of the community, participating in public activities forbidden to slaves:

I early began to attend the meetings of the colored people of New Bedford, and to take part in them. I was somewhat amazed to see colored men drawing up resolutions and offering them for consideration. Several colored young men of New Bedford, at that period, gave promise of great usefulness. They were educated, and possessed what seemed to me, at that time, very superior talents (350).

During one such public meeting a black man who had threatened a fugitive slave with exposure was mobbed and turned out of town. The action, which secured the fugitive's right to free space, was a reversal of Thomas Auld's disruption of the slave's Sunday School meeting. But while Douglass would later write that in New Bedford he had seen

thank "Mrs Julia Crofts" for her "substantial assistance" (706).

"a pretty near approach to freedom on the part of the colored people," he almost immediately encountered the limitations which effectually denied full subjectivity to the ostensibly "free" African Americans of the North (346-347).

Although his religious fervour had cooled somewhat since his conversion, Douglass "resolved to join the Methodist church in New Bedford, and to enjoy the spiritual advantage of public worship" (351). Much like the camp meeting he had attended with Thomas Auld, however, the church was segregated, with African American members restricted to the gallery. Initially, Douglass "[regarded] this proscription simply as an accommodation of the unconverted I was willing thus to be proscribed, lest sinners should be driven away from the saving power of the gospel. Once converted, I thought they would be sure to treat me as a man and a brother" (351). Although Douglass initially distinguished between non-members and the true Christians who had joined the church, enlightenment came when the general congregation was dismissed and Rev. Bonney administered the sacrament, carefully ensuring that all the white members were served first. The echo of the familiar anti-slavery slogan ("Am I Not a Man and a Brother?") makes it clear that Douglass equated the ability to occupy a space with full recognition of his subjectivity. While the North had dispensed with chattel slavery early in the century, it had developed segregation and other restrictions designed to designate, maintain and contain the African American "other." Only after the white members had received communion did the black members of the church, "poor, slavish souls," go forward to take communion. Douglass left and joined "a small body of colored

Methodists," remaining until the influence of William Lloyd Garrison convinced him that, by joining the Methodist church, he was condoning the actions of the church's Southern, slaveholding members.

Less than six months after he had arrived in New Bedford Douglass subscribed to William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery newspaper, The Liberator. He was impressed by Garrison's call for immediate emancipation, later writing, "I not only liked -- I *loved* this paper, and its editor" (354). In 1841 the abolitionist William Coffin heard Douglass "speaking to my colored friends, in the little school-house on Second street, New Bedford, where we worshiped" (357). Coffin invited Douglass to speak at the anti-slavery convention in Nantucket. Douglass nervously accepted. His speech prompted a moving response from Garrison, who, as the leader of the American Anti-Slavery Society, took the former slave "as his text" (358). The next day the general agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society called on Douglass and asked him to become an agent. Douglass accepted the position and became a paid public speaker. "Young, ardent, and hopeful, I entered upon this new life in the full gush of unsuspecting enthusiasm For a time I was made to forget that my skin was dark and my hair crisped" (359-360). For the first time his blackness, ordinarily an indication of his otherness, did not bar him from the larger public sphere or the space in which it was enacted.

And yet, as Douglass was to discover, the title *agent* was, in his case, somewhat ironic. An agent is defined, not only as a representative, but as one who has the power to act. Douglass's actions on the platform, however, were circumscribed by Garrison and

his white allies, who wished "to pin me down to my simple narrative" (361). Once he was on the lecture platform and metaphorically "pinned" down, like a butterfly in a natural history display, Douglass became an artifact, an object to be observed. In the words of Douglass's biographer Benjamin Quarles, Douglass was a "prize exhibit" (16). Thus, if Douglass was initially "made to forget" his otherness, this state of forgetfulness did not last long: in their attempts to declare the former slave's humanity, this otherness was precisely the quality that the abolitionists emphasized. "I was generally introduced as a '*chattel*' -- a '*thing*' -- a piece of southern '*property*' -- the chairman assuring the audience that *it* could speak" Douglass writes (*My Bondage* 360). Introduced into the public debate as a "*brand new fact*," Douglass was objectified in the public space of the lecture platform even as he attempted to use it to assert his subjectivity.

Douglass's position as *Garrison's* text was symptomatic of the Anti-Slavery Society's paternalism. When one considers, as feminist critics Gilbert and Gubar have, that patriarchal Western culture identifies the text's author as "a father, a progenitor, a procreator," it is clear that the paternalism which had characterized his relationship with Hugh Auld in the Aulds' domestic/slave space was replicated in Douglass's relationship to his anti-slavery mentors in public, "free" space and its accompanying sphere (6). In attempting to maintain what they deemed to be his "authenticity," white abolitionists advised Douglass that it was "[b]etter [for him] have a *little* of the plantation manner of speech than not," in spite of the fact that he "was now reading and thinking I was growing and needed room" (361-362). By seeking to contain Douglass's mind in what

they deemed to be an appropriate mental space they, like Hugh Auld, were "[shutting him] up in mental darkness" (Narrative 276). By doing so, the Anti-Slavery Society -- albeit with the best of intentions -- seems to have been desirous of maintaining the mental boundaries imposed by slavery in the interests of attacking the institution itself.

In spite of the advice that "'tis not best that [he] seem too learned," Douglass's obvious intellectual abilities, coupled with his refusal to name his master and his state of origin in his lectures, eventually cast doubt upon his story (362). In 1845, therefore, he published Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. While the publication proved that he was not an imposter, it also put him in real danger: "though I had reached a free state, and had attained a position for public usefulness, I was still tormented with the liability of losing my liberty" (Bondage 364). That same year Douglass was forced "to seek a refuge from republican slavery in monarchical England" (365). As the ideological paradox contained in the previous sentence suggests, the trip highlighted the constraints imposed upon Douglass in the "free" Northern states.

Like all passengers of colour, Douglass was denied a first class cabin. His notoriety, however, made the crossing eventful. When other passengers on board the *Cambria* asked him to give a lecture, a group of Southerners "swore I should not speak. They went so far as to threaten to throw me overboard, and but for the firmness of Captain Judkins, probably would have . . . attempted to put their threats into execution" (367). Incensed that the ship's captain had threatened to put them in irons, the "salt water mobocrats. . . flew to the press to justify their conduct, and to denounce me as a worthless

and insolent negro" (367). The denunciation backfired: Douglass's accusers were blamed for causing the disturbance and the incident secured Douglass a national audience.

In spite of the fact that the ship's cabins, like much of the public accommodation Douglass used, were segregated, the Southern gentry's attempt to demarcate the boundaries between themselves and the black "other" by controlling that "other's" access to the public sphere failed. Although segregation had been instituted because "American prejudice against color triumphed over British liberality and civilization," the other passengers' unwillingness to patrol and maintain the boundaries between themselves and Douglass -- as evidenced by the invitation to speak -- caused those boundaries to collapse. While English society erected boundaries of its own, these were not the boundaries to which Douglass was accustomed. He found himself, therefore, in an apparently non-segregated space for the very first time.

"I live a new life," Douglass wrote the editor of The Liberator in 1846.

[T]he kind hospitality constantly proffered to me by persons of the highest rank in society; the spirit of freedom that seems to animate all with whom I come in contact, and the entire absence of everything that looked like prejudice against me, on account of the color of my skin -- contrasted so strongly with my long and bitter experience in the United States, that I look with wonder and amazement on the transition (quoted in Bondage 370).

In America he was "denied the privileges and courtesies common to others in the use of the most humble means of conveyance"; every public space, including "any place of worship, instruction, or amusement" could turn him away from the door with the phrase "*We don't allow niggers in here*" (370-371). This continued inability to occupy public

space, even in the Northern "free" states, was indicative of his non-subject status. "Where then is our political superiority to the enslaved?" demanded African American writer Martin Delany in 1852.

[N]one, neither are we superior in any other relation to society, except that we are defacto masters of ourselves and joint rulers of our own domestic household, while the bond man's self is claimed by another, and his relation to his family denied him. . . . [T]hose who [are] freemen, whether in the South or North, [occupy] a subservient, servile, and menial position, considering it a favor to get into the service of the whites, and do their degrading offices (Delany 15-17).

In Dublin, however, Douglass, no longer shunted to society's margins, dined with the lord mayor. He used public transportation and visited Britain's public buildings without incident. Although America had severed ties with the "tyrannous" mother country, for the ex-slave it was monarchical Britain, rather than the United States, which was truly "free space."

Exile, and this paradoxical depiction of America's historical oppressor as a truly free space is a recurring theme in African American slave narratives. The escaped slave William Wells Brown, for example, described a transatlantic experience which was comparable to Douglass's. Of his trip to England, Brown wrote:

No person of my complexion can visit this country without being struck with the marked difference between the English and the Americans. The prejudice which I have experienced on all and every occasion in the United States, and to some extent on board the *Canada*, vanished as soon as I set foot on the soil of Britain. In America I had been bought and sold as a slave in the Southern States. In the so-called Free States, I had been treated as one born to occupy an inferior position, -- in steamers, compelled to take my fare on the deck; in hotels, to take my meals in the kitchen; in coaches, to ride on the outside; in railways, to ride in the

"negro-car;" and in churches, to sit in the "negro-pew." But no sooner was I on British soil, than I was recognized as a man, and an equal (The American Fugitive in Europe 98).

Brown's progression is both real and symbolic: if the *Canada* was his ship, it is also an oft-touted free space of refuge. As Martin Delany and others noted, however, prejudice, and its attendant spatial restrictions, were present even there. Truly free space could be found only out of America's sphere of influence.

Although they highlighted their free access to Britain's public spaces for the purposes of anti-slavery propaganda, neither Douglass nor Brown were ignorant of the fact that they were objects of curiosity and exotica in Europe. Here, also, each man was a "brand new fact," although the fact's comparative rarity meant that "it" excited interest, rather than animosity. Brown was a cynosure in Dublin even in the midst of a royal procession, while Douglass wrote a private letter satirizing the attention he received: "It is quite an advantage to be a n--r here. I find I am hardly black enough for British taste, but by keeping my hair as woolly as possible I make out to pass for at least for half a Negro at any rate. My good friend Buffum finds the tables turned upon him here completely -- the people lavish nearly all their attention on the Negro" (Foner, Life and Writings 1:136).

This objectification does not, however, make Britain any less valuable as a symbol of truly free space. Indeed, the absence of formal spatial barriers tempts Douglass to remain. While British admirers soon collected enough money to effect Douglass's purchase and manumission, Douglass himself would later write that, had he been "a private person, having no other relations or duties than those of a personal and family

nature, I should never have consented to the payment of so large a sum for the privilege of living securely under our glorious republican form of government. I could have remained in England, or have gone to some other country" (Bondage 376). Indeed, there is evidence that he seriously contemplated staying in England: he wrote "Sister Harriet" (a young woman who lived in the Douglass household for a time) and asked her to persuade his wife to consider moving abroad. He included a letter to Anna herself, to be read, with the letter to Harriet, "over and over again until Dear Anna shall fully understand their contents" (McFeely 136). McFeely writes that the words "over and over again" indicate that Anna Douglass was stubborn, rather than dim: manumission in hand, Douglass, in spite of the letter's repeated reading, boarded a Boston bound ship twenty-one months after arriving in Britain.

It was rather hard, after having enjoyed nearly two years of equal social privileges in England, often dining with gentlemen of great literary, social, political, and religious eminence -- never, during the whole time, having met with a single word, look, or gesture, which gave me the slightest reason to think my color was an offence to anybody -- now to be cooped up in the stern of the Cambria, and denied the right to enter the saloon, lest my dark presence should be deemed an offence to some of my democratic fellow passengers (My Bondage 391).

Douglass's fellow passengers were not the only ones unfavourably compared to his British hosts -- American abolitionists did not fare so well either. The American Anti-Slavery Society's opposition to his proposal, backed by British donations, to start a newspaper of his own highlighted the paternalism of many white abolitionists. Indeed, the objections raised against Douglass's editorial ambitions suggested that he was still

something less than his mentors' equal. He was, after all, a poorly educated specimen who "was better fitted to speak than to write My American friends looked at me with astonishment! 'A wood-sawyer' offering himself to the public as an editor! A slave, brought up in the very depths of ignorance, assuming to instruct the highly civilized people of the north in the principles of liberty, justice and humanity! The thing looked absurd" (393-394).

Douglass's beginnings as William Lloyd Garrison's text made independent publication a necessary action. "Something of a hero worshiper" at the beginning of his career, he had accepted his colleagues' paternalism, not recognizing, initially at least, that he was being confined, as an object, to the very space in which he had believed his subjectivity would be publicly recognized (354). However, "[b]y itself, the lecture platform possibly seemed too much like the auction block," writes Eric J. Sunquist ("Literacy and Paternalism" 123). In spite of the speeches excerpted in the appendix of My Bondage and My Freedom, the lecture platform had become yet another site where Douglass struggled to be recognized as a subject, rather than as the marginalized object. Unmediated writing, rather than telling a "simple narrative" to be interpreted by others would allow Douglass, rather than his former mentors, to define the boundaries of his own public persona.

Once he had freed himself from the confinement of the abolitionist movement's imposed bounds of "authenticity," therefore, Douglass became something more than a former slave who simply related the fact of his former enslavement. Now, he was also a

"free" African American struggling to have his subjectivity publicly recognized. Key to this recognition was the ability to obtain unrestricted access to public spaces -- for, in spite of his increased notoriety, Douglass, like the rest of his African American peers, was rigorously confined to the margins of public space.

Public conveyances were Douglass's new battle sites. At one point, when he refused to move back to the "Jim Crow" car during a railway trip, the conductor, joined by "half a dozen fellows of the baser sort," attempted to drag Douglass from his seat. "In dragging me out, on this occasion, it must have cost the company twenty-five or thirty dollars, for I tore up seats and all." As a result, the railroad's superintendent "ordered the trains to run through Lynn [Massachusetts] without stopping" as long as Douglass remained in town (My Bondage and My Freedom 400). Although the segregation of railway cars was eventually abandoned in Massachusetts, Douglass noted that, on more than one occasion, white patrons preferred to stand for the trip's entirety rather than sit beside him. At one point, however, when the governor of the state took the empty seat next to Douglass to exchange pleasantries with him, "[the] despised seat now became honored. His excellency had removed all the prejudice against sitting by the side of a negro The governor had, without changing my skin a single shade, made the place respectable which before was despicable" (403). Even abolitionists "half-cured" of their prejudice against colour were uneasy when the spatial and social boundaries between whites and blacks were breached, while others clumsily made a point of sharing public spaces with Douglass in order to show that they were free of the feelings which they

"were nobly struggling against" (400, 389). Although Douglass can insist on taking a seat in a railway car, there is a limit to his agency: the removal of prejudice, over which he has no control, lies within the power of white men. By documenting racial discrimination, therefore, Douglass issues a challenge to his readers.

What such anecdotes make clear is that Douglass no longer views the North as free space. Although it is not the slave space from which he escaped, its consistent refusal to recognize the "free" African American as a subject rather than as the marginalized other makes it an unfree, if not a slave, space. The "freedom" in the title My Bondage and My Freedom, unlike the freedom of the earlier Narrative, has yet to be realized. My Bondage and My Freedom, therefore, ends with a pledge "to advocate the great and primary work of the universal and unconditional emancipation of my entire race" -- a pledge which encompasses the inequities of both the North and the South (406).

In spite of Douglass's revisionist ending, however, one thing remains the same: properly recognized subjectivity is achieved with the occupation of public space. Although Douglass recognizes the importance of homeplace in his second narrative, public space, rather than domestic space, remains the primary site of such recognition. As I noted in my discussion of the Douglass' domestic life, Frederick Douglass's traditional position as the head of his household undoubtedly made him accord greater importance to public space and public life. Douglass's autobiographical writings make it clear that, as an adult male, his subjectivity must be recognized outside of the homeplace as well as within it. Even though the homeplace has played an important part in his development, he must

leave it behind to be recognized as an adult subject. In spite of Douglass's avowed feminist sympathies, there no indication that women must leave homeplace behind, nor is there any real discussion of its continuing importance in women's lives. In my next chapter I will discuss one bondwoman's experience of her master's domestic slave space and her own continuing efforts to create a secure homeplace outside of slave space. Although Harriet Jacobs, like Frederick Douglass, links the occupation of public spaces to the public recognition of African American subjectivity, it is the black woman's untrammelled access to a homeplace of her own which, for her, primarily represents that recognition.

FOUR

Domestic Space and the Search for Homeplace in Harriet Jacobs's

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.

Although he spent his first free years in Massachusetts, Douglass opened his newspaper office in Rochester, New York in order to avoid direct competition with his former mentor and sometime rival William Lloyd Garrison, who operated the abolitionist newspaper The Liberator in Boston. In Rochester, Douglass maintained a friendship with fellow anti-slavery activist John Jacobs, a man left unmentioned in his second autobiography. In 1849, when the two made a lecture tour together, Douglass praised his friend's "calm but feeling manner" on the public platform. Later that same year, John Jacobs and his sister Harriet opened the Rochester Anti-Slavery Office and Reading Room. Located in the same building as Douglass's newspaper, the reading room advertised that it had been "newly stocked with the latest and best works on slavery and other moral questions." (Yellin, "Through Her Brother's Eyes" 46-47). "[T]he Office go on as usual had a few here to meeting on Sunday" Harriet Jacobs wrote Amy Post in May of that year. "I suppose we shall have Frederick and Miss Griffiths here on Sunday to draw a full house" (Incidents, "Correspondence" 230). In spite of the Jacobs' best efforts, however, the reading room closed that summer. In 1850, after he had tried -- and failed -- to establish a restaurant, John Jacobs left for California. Harriet Jacobs returned to New

York City, where she resumed her job as a domestic in the household of Nathaniel P. Willis. The closing of the Anti-Slavery Reading Room, however, did not mark the end of Harriet Jacobs's abolitionist activity: twelve years later she published Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl under the pseudonym of Linda Brent.

Although the reading room did not prove to be economically viable, I believe that it is significant that Harriet Jacobs served a portion of her literary apprenticeship -- the only part which was not served surreptitiously -- in the same office building that housed Douglass's newspaper. For Douglass, the occupation of the newspaper office in Rochester, a physical space so clearly representative of the public sphere, was tangible evidence of his own right to be recognized as a subject within that sphere. Harriet Jacobs could not help but be interested in these issues: an escaped slave herself, she knew only too well that the African American's exclusion from the public spaces of the "free" North was evidence of the country's continuing refusal to recognize African American subjectivity. And yet, although the latter part of Jacob's autobiography details the humiliations she and other African Americans experienced in the public spaces of the segregated North, her decision to enter the public sphere (through pseudonymous publication) was primarily prompted by her concern with domestic space. In detailing the author's sexual exploitation, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl also documents the continued violation of the African American's right to claim for herself that domestic space which, no less than the occupation of public space, is an indication of her own subjectivity. Indeed, Jacobs's interest in private space was prompted by her gender: as the

site of the domestic sphere, domestic space was the arena women had to occupy if they were to be seen as women at all. To claim this space, however, Jacobs had to be seen by her readers as a subject, as a woman who could rightfully claim to occupy it. The best way to do this was to stake her claim to it in the public realm, publicly revealing both her right and the violation of that right.

Jacobs telegraphs her interest in domestic space in the first paragraph of her narrative. "I was born a slave, but I never knew it till six years of happy childhood had passed away," she begins. A craftsman who is allowed to hire his time, Jacobs's father makes an unsuccessful attempt to buy his family. Although this effort at manumission fails, Jacobs writes that her parents "lived together in a comfortable home; and, though we were all slaves, I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to them for safekeeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment" (Jacobs 5). The use of the word "home" here is strategic: Jacobs knew that the word would evoke a powerful, patriarchal model of domesticity in the minds of her Northern, middle-class readers, one in which both parents and children occupied the same domestic space. Just as importantly, the occupants of that model "home" are subjects, rather than saleable objects. Jacobs immediately reminds the reader that this image is illusory, however; juxtaposed with the domestic image that the word "home" presents is a reminder of the particular fragility of the slave's domestic space. What follows is a calculated disruption of the image that the word initially produced.

When Jacobs's mother dies Jacobs is sent to live with the woman who was her

mother's foster sister and mistress. "I was told that my home was now to be with [my mother's] . . . mistress; and I found it a happy one . . . I would sit by her side for hours, sewing diligently, with a heart as free from care as that of any free-born white child" (7). But this "home," too, is illusory: when the mistress dies, Jacobs, who had hoped to be manumitted, is "bequeathed" to her mistress's five-year-old niece (8). "My mistress had taught me the precepts of God's Word: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' . . . But I was her slave, and I suppose she did not recognize me as her neighbor" (8). "Neighbor," like "home," implies subjectivity as well as spatial proximity; Jacobs shares the latter but is not legally accorded the former. Thus, although she occupies a domestic space, the fact that her subjectivity is not ultimately recognized means that this space is *not* homeplace, even though the mistress's affection causes it to masquerade as such. Jacobs's paradoxical position as the favoured foster-niece who/which is, simultaneously, a heritable chattel, is illustrative of the complexity of the relationships between occupants of the slave-owning household, relationships which, in turn, produced a complex, overlapping multiplicity of spaces.

In the slave-owning household domestic space is also, simultaneously, slave space. Thus Jacobs's legal status as she enters her "new home," is not that of subject and foster niece, but that of object, "the property of [Dr. and Mrs. Flint's] little daughter." Her brother "William" (actually John Jacobs) has also been purchased by the same family. "When we entered our new home we encountered cold looks, cold words, and cold treatment. . . . On my narrow bed I moaned and wept, I felt so desolate and alone" (9).

Forced to abandon their family's domestic space for the Flint household, the children have been denied a site where they could truly be defined as subjects. Although Jacobs makes it clear that the home her parents had established was located in an impermanent domestic space, it did, nonetheless, fit the definition of homeplace: Jacobs's "father . . . had more of the feelings of a freeman than is common among slaves" and his efforts to impart these feelings to his children had created a homeplace in his tenuously held domestic space (9).

In spite of his efforts, however, the homeplace has no official recognition: its inhabitants are legally the property of different owners. The slaveowner's claim disrupts what Jacobs and her contemporaries would have seen as the "natural" patriarchal family model. Instead of being recognized as the head of the family, the father is himself a dependent, whose "natural" patriarchal position is usurped by the slave owner. The father's loss of position is made clear by the following exchange between father and son:

One day, when his father and his mistress had happened to call him at the same time, [Jacobs's brother] hesitated between the two; being perplexed to know which had the strongest claim upon his obedience. He finally concluded to go to his mistress. . . . "You are *my* child," replied our father, "and when I call you, you should come immediately, if you have to pass through fire and water" (9).

Jacobs effectively reinforces the notion that William is being forced to submit to an unnatural order of things by temporarily placing the mistress at the head of the household. This does not mean that Jacobs's narrative exclusively espouses the patriarchal model: she describes her grandmother's home and her own efforts to build a similar space for her own children without regretting the absence of a patriarchal figurehead. Nonetheless, Jacobs

effectively uses the mistress's presence and power to demonstrate her father's displacement.

The destruction of the slave's homeplace is elaborated on in Jacobs's description of "The Slaves' New Year's day." Here, Jacobs moves from her personal experience to an authoritative description of the annual separation slave families were only too apt to experience on the south's "hiring-day," an event which is contrasted with the security of her readers' imagined holiday celebration:

O, you happy free women, contrast *your* New Year's day with that of the poor bond-woman! . . . [T]o the slave mother New Year's day comes laden with peculiar sorrows. She sits on her cold cabin floor, watching the children who may be torn from her the next morning She may be an ignorant creature . . . but she has a mother's instincts, and is capable of feeling a mother's agonies (16).

The slave family's separation is described in spatial terms: the cold cabin floor is the site of both physical discomfort and emotional desolation, a stark contrast to the imagined warmth (emotional and otherwise) experienced by the white, middle-class reader, whose children "raise their rosy lips for a caress" (16).

Jacobs's calculated use of the word "home" in these opening pages not only juxtaposes her readers' "natural" expectations with the "unnatural" effects of slavery: it also implicitly highlights two competing household models. Historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes that, while both models were patriarchal, Northern society "was undergoing a reconversion of household into home and ideologically ascribing it to the female sphere, [while] southern society was reinforcing the centrality of plantation and

farm households" (Within the Plantation Household 39).

Southern slave society consisted largely of a network of households that contained within themselves the decisive relations of production and reproduction. In the South, in contrast to the North, the household retained a vigor that permitted southerners to ascribe many matters -- notably labor relations . . . to the private sphere, whereas northerners would increasingly ascribe them to the public spheres of market and state (38).

Although Fox-Genovese acknowledges that many rural Northern households also functioned as self-contained units of production, the North's increasing urbanization and industrialization, coupled with the "triumph of capitalist social relations" lead, by and large, to "the separation of home and work -- the reduction of household to home -- [which] constituted the material embodiment of northeastern men's and women's separate spheres" (61). In the north, therefore, there was public space, the sight of production which was driven by market values, and domestic space, which was supposed to be a refuge from those values. In Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America Gillian Brown notes that "[e]xponents of domesticity defined the home as a peaceful order in contrast to the disorder and fluctuations occasioned by competitive economic activity in the marketplace. 'Our men are sufficiently money-making,' Sarah Josepha Hale advised readers of The Ladies Magazine. 'Let us keep women and children from the contagion as long as possible.'" (Brown 15) While, as Jacobs's post-slavery experiences will show, the presence of waged domestic labour prevented Northern, middle-class homes from being entirely sealed off from the world of labour relations, the economy of the Northern states, unlike that of the South, did not overwhelmingly rely

upon agricultural goods produced by the plantation household.

In the agrarian South, however, "the decisive social relations of production were contained within the household rather than outside it, for the household constituted the dominant unit of production throughout the antebellum era" (Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household 56). Although the domestic space of the "'big house' -- the master's residence -- was separate from the slave quarters all, together, formed one household, since these separate spaces operated together as a unit, pooling income and resources" (86). In spite of their best efforts to create spaces for themselves, slaves were forced to contribute to the income of their master's household and, ultimately, were chattels that belonged to that household. "Such truncated households as slaves did manage to form existed at the pleasure or with the sufferance of the master," Fox-Genovese has concluded (93).

This placed house slaves, in particular, in a curious position. While some slaves, such as Jacobs's father, did have a chance to establish an emotionally, if not financially, independent homeplace, where they could be seen (by themselves at least) to be subjects rather than objects, domestic slaves, as the chief props of the slave owner's domestic space, could rarely claim a separate domestic space of their own. As Karen Sanchez-Eppler writes in Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism and the Politics of the Body, "slavery can create the private, domestic realm [for the slaveowner] precisely because the slave has no privacy and no claim on domestic space" (88). Taxed with the slaveholding household's most essential tasks, slaves were frequently apostrophized as lazy and

childlike; acknowledged as part of the slaveowner's family in the phrase "my family, white and black," slaves were chattel who could be separated from their families and sold for profit at the will of the owner; sharing domestic space with white families, slaves were often placed in physical positions which emphasized their inferior status.

These paradoxes are illustrated by Jacobs's description of the plight of her Aunt Nancy. Like Jacobs's mother, Nancy shares with Mrs. Flint both the quasi-familial bond of foster sister and the domestic space of the Flint household. An indispensable member of that household, she is described as its "factotum" (144): "[supplying] the place of both housekeeper and waiting maid to her mistress [, she] was, in fact, the beginning and end of everything" (12). Nonetheless, Nancy is also Mrs. Flint's property and, as such, is forced to occupy a space which serves to demarcate both her otherness and her subjugation. "She had always slept on the floor in the entry, near Mrs. Flint's chamber door, that she might be within call" (143). Although Nancy is granted her own domestic space when she marries, her access to it is severely circumscribed:

When she was married, she was told that she might have the use of a small room in an outhouse. Her mother and her husband furnished it. He was a seafaring man, and was allowed to sleep there when he was at home. But on the wedding evening, the bride was ordered to her old post on the entry floor (148).

This practice seems to have been fairly common: in 1839 Angelina Grimké Weld, abolitionist scion of a prominent, slave-owning, North Carolina family wrote that "[c]hambermaids and seamstresses often sleep in their mistresses' apartments, but with no bedding at all. I know an instance of a woman who has been married eleven years, and yet

has never been allowed to sleep out of her mistresses' chamber" ("Testimony" 347).

Describing another slaveowner, Weld wrote:

Except at family prayer, [no slaves] were permitted to *sit* in her presence, but the seamstresses and waiting maids, and they, however delicate might be their circumstances, were forced to sit upon low stools, without backs, that they might be constantly reminded of their inferiority (342).

Not so reticent as Weld, Jacobs explicitly details both the nature of this "delicate circumstance" and its outcome:

. . . my aunt was compelled to lie at [the mistress'] door, until one midnight she was forced to leave, to give premature birth to a child. In a fortnight she was required to resume her place on the entry floor, because Mrs. Flint's babe needed her attentions. She kept her station there through summer and winter, until she had given birth to six children, and all the while she was employed as night-nurse to Mrs. Flint's children (143).

Nancy's inability to maintain more than a perfunctory domestic space of her own, coupled with her mistress's orders that she remain in what is so obviously a position of subjection, indicates her status as non-subject within the slaveowning household. In a shared domestic space, where status cannot be maintained through absolute physical separation (as it is in the case of freestanding slave quarters), the slave's prostrate position serves as an indication of her otherness. Nancy's reward for her "faithfulness" -- her docility -- is the paradoxical recognition of a kind of quasi-subjectivity: when Nancy dies the Flints wish to accord her the rare honour of being buried in the Flint family plot (146). It is, as Annalucia Accardo and Alessandro Portelli have pointed out, "[an] ambiguous attachment indeed: the display of affection continues possession and dependency even in the grave" (85). Like Nancy, the unnamed chambermaid of Angelina Grimké Weld's

account is given "the highest character as a faithful servant": mistress and slave are "tenderly attached to each other" ("Testimony" 347).

In spite of this quasi-subjectivity, the slaves' otherness was part of an entrenched ideology. The slave woman's difference was defined, not only by her servitude, but also by what was believed to be the innate inferiority and sexual promiscuity of her race: qualities which excluded her from the dominant culture's definition of the feminine ideal of True Womanhood. In Reconstructing Womanhood: the Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist, Hazel Carby describes the nature of this exclusion:

The parameters of the ideological discourse of true womanhood were bound by a shared social understanding that external physical appearance reflected internal qualities of character While fragility was valorized as the ideal state of woman, heavy labor required other physical attributes. Strength and ability to bear fatigue, argued to be so distasteful a presence in a white woman, were positive features to be emphasized in the promotion and selling of a black female field hand at a slave auction (Carby 25).¹

But if the ideology of True Womanhood valorized white upper-class women's supposed fragility and purity, Frances Smith Foster points out that Jacobs's narrative is "an explicit expose of the ways in which some women assume the trappings of True Womanhood to hide their hypocrisy and moral weakness" (Foster, Herself 113). The mistress, a model of True Womanhood, is described in negative, and highly ironic, terms: "Mrs. Flint, like many southern women, was totally deficient in energy. She had not the

¹ It is important to note, as Carby does, that women could be excluded from the cult of true womanhood by class as well as by race -- physical strength was a prized attribute for lower-class, non-black women as well.

strength to superintend her household affairs; but her nerves were so strong, that she could sit in her easy chair and see a woman whipped, till the blood trickled from every stroke of the lash" (Jacobs 12).

Although the ideology of True Womanhood celebrated the sanctity of the home -- and was, indeed, supposed to be the key to its preservation -- Mrs. Flint enters the domestic space of the kitchen only to despoil it by disrupting the activities of feeding and nurturing.

If dinner was not served at the exact time . . . she would station herself in the kitchen, and wait till it was dished, and then spit in all the kettles and pans that had been used for cooking. She did this to prevent the cook and her children from eking out their meagre fare with the remains of the gravy and other scrapings. The slaves could get nothing to eat except what she chose to give them (12).

As Anne Bradford Warner has noted, Incidents "reverse[s] the types of generous patriarch, nurturing mistress and grateful slave to reshape the plantation myth and replace it with a scathing picture of white southern consumption" (23). Whereas Southern hospitality -- often in the form of bounteous meals -- was both celebrated and legendary, Warner states that, "In a succession of anecdotes Jacobs shows that the slave is not only deprived of food but fed upon" (23).

Much like Frederick Douglass, who began his Narrative by recounting the violation of domestic space by the kitchen beating -- and presumed sexual exploitation -- of his own aunt, Jacobs strikes at her readers' sensibilities by writing about the Flints' violation of domestic space by deliberate acts of violence, parsimony and spiteful waste.

As I have pointed out in earlier chapters, Northern, middle-class readers believed the kitchen to be the site of bourgeois domesticity, the heart of the home and the woman's "natural" place. In Jacobs's account of the southern household, however, this traditional site of bounty and nurturance is a slave space, and therefore a location of malicious deprivation. In the Flint's kitchen even bounty is a perverse form of torture:

The cook never sent a dinner to [Dr. Flint's] table without fear and trembling; for if there happened to be a dish not to his liking, he would either order her to be whipped, or compel her to eat every mouthful of it in his presence. The poor, hungry creature might not have objected to eating it; but she did object to having her master cram it down her throat till she choked (Jacobs 12).

That the cook is "sometimes . . . locked up away from her nursing baby, for a whole day and a night" is yet further evidence of the slaveholder's power to cut family ties and withhold nurturance (12).

This violation of domestic space is implicitly linked to the sexual exploitation of slave women by the inclusion, in the same chapter, of Jacobs's own primal scene -- she hears, but, unlike Douglass, does not see, the whipping of another slave. Like the punishment of Douglass's Aunt Esther, this whipping has overtones of sexual exploitation. A fieldhand from one of the doctor's farms is tied up and punished in the work house -- a specialized space for the discipline of paupers and recalcitrant slaves.² "Some . . . said the

² Angelina Grimké Weld writes that one mistress "would occasionally send her slaves, male and female, to the Charleston work-house to be punished. One poor girl, who was accordingly stripped *naked* and whipped, showed me the deep gashes on her back [The mistress] sent another female slave there, to be imprisoned and worked on the tread-mill" ("Testimony" 341)

slave had quarrelled with his wife, in the presence of the overseer, and had accused his master of being the father of her child" (13). Whether or not Jacobs had initially intended to juxtapose these two accounts is unclear -- Lydia Maria Child rearranged some of the narrative's material "for purposes of condensation and orderly arrangement" (3). What is clear, however, is that, wherever Jacobs intended it to be placed, the inclusion of both this anecdote and the subsequent one -- in which a dying slave who has given birth to her master's child is mocked by her mistress -- serve to show that the effect of the slaveowner's destruction of the slave's domestic space is the destruction of the slave family itself.

Throughout Incidents Jacobs's grandmother's house serves as a counterpoint to the Flint household. Unlike Mrs. Flint, "Aunt Marthy" is an active woman; it is by "perseverance and unwearied industry" that she has become "mistress of a snug little home, surrounded by the necessaries of life" (17). Unlike the domestic space of Jacobs's father, this space legally belongs to the grandmother, in spite of the fact that she has been cheated out of her savings by an unscrupulous mistress. When Dr. Flint seeks to deny the grandmother her long-promised manumission by selling her privately, she defies him and stands on the auction block until "a maiden lady, seventy years old, the sister of my grandmother's deceased mistress, who . . . knew how cruelly she had been defrauded of her rights" ensures "Aunt Marthy's" freedom by purchasing her for fifty dollars. A baker by trade, the grandmother acquires a house with "a grand big oven . . . that baked nice things for the town" (17). Grudgingly fed by the Flints, Jacobs and her brother "knew that

there was always a choice bit in store for [them]" when they went by their grandmother's door (17).

The grandmother's trade is the ultimate sign of her role as nurturer. Unlike the "debased and false domestic rituals" of the Flint household, the grandmother's actions prove her to be "the unfailing nurturer of white and black" (Warner 26). Most importantly, the domestic space which is a site of that nurturance functions, however intermittently, as a homeplace for Harriet and other enslaved relatives. At one point Jacobs remarks that she "was indebted to [grandmother] for all my comforts, spiritual or temporal" (11); at another she is "strengthened by her [grandmother's] love" before she returns to her master's (10).

That this homeplace is the site of subjectivity for Jacobs's family is made explicit when the grandmother succeeds in buying her son Phillip. Although Phillip's manumission does not give him full subjectivity in the eyes of the law, he is free to occupy a chosen domestic space and create his own homeplace. "The happy mother and son sat together by the old hearthstone that night, telling how proud they were of each other, and how they would prove to the world that they could take care of themselves" (26). The warm hearthstone, the physical and symbolic centre of the homeplace, stands in contrast with the cold floor of the imagined New Year's day cabin of the slave. With this newly acquired subjectivity is an assurance of the family's self-sufficiency, an implicit reference to the primary argument of slavery's supporters. In Sociology for the South (1854) George Fitzhugh had argued, "We do not set children and women free because they are *not*

capable of taking care of themselves, not equal to the constant struggle of society. . .

. [H]alf of mankind are but grown-up children, and liberty is as fatal to them as it would be to children" (230-31, emphasis added). Fitzhugh had originally published this portion of his argument in his pamphlet Slavery Justified, by a Southerner 1850. Given her access to both Douglass's newspaper and the Anti-Slavery Reading Room it is not improbable that Jacobs would have read, consciously chosen to echo, the words of her opponent: she had, after all, already shown herself to be knowledgeable by quoting the words of an anti-slavery tract on her title page.³

Donald B. Gibson has pointed out, however, the purchase of Phillip represents only a partial victory at best:

Whereas Linda's grandmother comes close to having what she most desires -- freedom and a home for her family -- she does not achieve all; slavery will not allow that, will not allow her to live unfettered with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren in one domestic space. She acquires the space, even within the confines of the institution of slavery, yet she is never allowed to fill the space with all its proper occupants (169).

Jacobs, her brother and her Aunt Nancy remain in the possession -- and in the domestic

³ On the title page of Incidents Jacobs quotes an anonymous "Woman of North Carolina" as saying, "Northerners know nothing at all about Slavery. They have no conception of the depth of *degradation* involved in that word, SLAVERY; if they had, they would never cease their efforts until so horrible a system was overthrown." Although Frances Smith Foster, in Written by Herself, has argued that Jacobs quotes herself to establish her own authority and authenticity, the epigraph is actually a direct quote from Angelina Grimké's Appeal to the Christian Women of the South (1836). While Foster makes note of this in a later article, the correction does not notably affect her argument, which posits that the use of the quotation is an example of how Incidents offers an alternative to the ideal of True Womanhood to African-American women ("Resisting Incidents" 74).

space of -- the Flints, a situation which becomes more perilous as Jacobs approaches puberty.

Although Jacobs takes pains to document Mrs. Flint's petty tyrannies, she begins her account of "The Trials of Girlhood" with an interesting admission. "During the first years of my service in Dr. Flint's family, I was accustomed to share some indulgences with the children of my mistress. Though this seemed to me no more than right, I was grateful for it, and tried to merit the kindness by the faithful discharge of my duties" (Jacobs 27). The scanty "linsey-woolsey" dress Jacobs is allowed every winter, though "hated" as "one of the badges of slavery," was the standard allotment of every slave (11).⁴ Although Mrs. Flint, in a fit of pique, makes "the little imp" remove a pair of new shoes and walk barefoot through the snow, Jacobs's admission that she has shared "some indulgences" suggests that she does not truly bear the brunt of the Flints' behaviour until she reaches puberty.

I now entered my fifteenth year -- a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. But he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof with him -- where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature (Jacobs 27).

By pursuing his house slave within the precincts of his own domestic space, Flint simultaneously violates both the Biblical injunction against adultery and the domestic

⁴ Eugene Fox-Genovese discusses plantation clothing allotments in Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (551).

space, which is sanctified by his own marriage and by the presence, in the form of his wife, of True Womanhood.

The ideology of True Womanhood held that the presence of chaste femininity ensured the sanctity of the home and guaranteed the husband's moral behaviour. That a man could violate this sanctity within the very space that held his own marriage bed made even Confederate loyalist and South Carolinian aristocrat Mary Chesnut wonder "if it be a sin to think slavery a curse to any land":

Men and women are punished when their masters and mistresses are brutes and not when they do wrong -- and then we live surrounded by prostitutes. An abandoned woman is sent out of any decent house elsewhere. Who thinks any worse of a negro or mulatto woman for being a thing we can't name? God forgive us, but ours is a *monstrous* system and wrong and iniquity Like the patriarchs of old our men live in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children -- and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds (Chesnut, Civil War 29).

Chesnut's indictment of the Southern system, as scathing as it is, also shows a great deal of ambivalence. Initially, she throws the blame for the sorry state of the southern home on masters and mistresses who are "brutes." However, Chesnut soon shifts the blame to what she sees as the true cause of the Southern home's defilement: the widespread tolerance of the incursions of black sexual impurity. The acceptance of the slave "prostitutes" into the bosom of the domestic space which, in accordance with the rigid social custom, expels the white "abandoned woman," threatens the Southern home.

In spite of her condemnation of black sexuality, Chesnut cannot fully absolve white

men. In another diary entry she excoriates her own father-in-law, said to have fathered several of his own slaves: "Good Lord, forgive me. Your commandment [honor thy father and thy mother] I cannot keep. How can I honor what is so little respectable *Rachel* and her brood make this place a horrid nightmare to me -- I believe in nothing, with this before me" (Chesnut, Civil War 71-72). In the end, however, the men are "[n]o worse than men everywhere, but the lower their mistresses, the more degraded they must be" (31). Thus, as Hazel Carby has pointed out, while white women were to act as a civilizing influence on their men, the presence of the black slave woman's rampant sexuality was said to quicken the white man's "baser instincts," making the slave ultimately "responsible for being a potential, and direct, threat to the conjugal sanctity of the white mistress" (Carby 27). Annalucia Accardo and Alessandro Portelli write that, while the cult of True Womanhood "required women to be frail, sexless [and] disembodied [,t]he strong physical and sexual presence of black women's bodies was an unacceptable yet inescapable shadow which undermined the hegemonic ideal The threatening, intimate nearness of black women's bodies in their own households drew out the hostility in the white mistresses" (Accardo and Portelli 84).

For Jacobs, however, the slave is not the source of contagion. Moving from her personal experience to a direct exhortation, she indicts both the slave master, who "pays no regard to his marriage vows" and the complicity of Northerners, who enact fugitive slave laws to "hunt the poor fugitive back into his den, 'full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness'" (Jacobs 36). Consignment to a violated space is not the fate of slaves alone:

Northern women who marry Southern slaveowners also find their homes poisoned by infidelity. "Jealousy and hatred enter the flowery home, and it is ravaged of its loveliness" (36). Notably, Jacobs attributes all marital problems to the institution of slavery: the traditional, patriarchal model of marriage, it is implied, is blissful when unaffected by its unnatural presence.

In indicting the master as the source of the home's defilement, Jacobs consciously reverses the perceived idea of the black woman as the unchaste despoiler of the Southern home. It is Flint, the slavemaster, rather than Jacobs, his innocent victim, who is responsible for the disruption of his family's "conjugal sanctity." Emphasizing her own helplessness and her master's culpability, Jacobs writes that "[t]he light heart which nature had given me became heavy with sad forebodings. The other slaves in my master's house noticed the change. Many of them pitied me; but none dared to ask the cause . . . They knew too well the guilty practices under that roof; they were aware that to speak of them was an offence that never went unpunished" (28). Fear of punishment keeps Jacobs from telling her grandmother about Flint's sexual advances. She has already seen one family destroyed when one woman acknowledged Flint as the father of her child. To divulge Flint's behaviour, therefore, would be to risk being sold away from the homeplace with which Jacobs has such valued, though intermittent, contact.

It is at the point when her access to the spirit-sustaining homeplace is threatened that Jacobs makes her direct appeal to her audience. She has chosen to reveal Flint's persecutions, "not to awaken sympathy for myself" but to arouse "compassion in your

hearts for my sisters still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered" (29). The link between Jacobs and those African American women still enslaved in the South was so obvious to her readers that it scarcely required comment. Jacobs, however, did not stop there: she claimed sisterhood, not only with other black women, but with white, middle-class women as well. "I once saw two beautiful children playing together. One was a fair white child; the other was her slave, and also her sister" (29). While the white child's passage from girlhood to womanhood and marriage "was blooming with flowers, and overarched by a sunny sky," the young slave "drank the cup of sin, and shame, and misery, whereof her persecuted race are compelled to drink" (29).

Jacobs's readers were no strangers to revelations of the sexual liaisons between slave and slave master which resulted in a sibling's legal ownership of her sister/chattel. But Jacobs's vision is not a sensational exposé -- it is a bold claim for the recognition of kinship. As Frances Smith Foster has pointed out, Jacobs "addressed her female readers as 'women and sisters' during a time when the question articulated by Sojourner Truth -- 'Ain't I a woman?' -- was not a rhetorical one for those to whom she spoke. Black women did not routinely claim such a relationship with white women, at least not in public and without apology" (Foster, *Herself* 105). By claiming kinship, Jacobs establishes her right to possess her own domestic space, a right which is the birthright of her white counterparts.⁵

⁵ Revolutionary though it was, Jacobs's claim to kinship was not entirely unprecedented: William L. Andrews notes that white feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Angelina

Although this potential bond between black and white women could prove to be powerful, Jacobs goes on to record, not its establishment, but the isolating consequences of its rejection. Rather than see Jacobs as a fellow victim, Mrs. Flint chooses to view the slave as "an *object* of her jealousy, and consequently, of her hatred" (Jacobs 34, emphasis added). Because Jacobs is an object, rather than a subject, she is undeserving of empathy. "[Mrs. Flint] felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted; but she had no compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy" (33). Like Mary Chesnut, Mrs. Flint ultimately blames that dark, other, alien presence for her husband's infidelity.

And yet, although Mrs. Flint is threatened by Jacobs's presence within the domestic space, her refusal to see Jacobs as a subject perpetuates both her own isolation and the slave girl's victimization. Although Jacobs can, in William L. Andrews' words, "see that it was in their mutual interest to confide in each other against their common harasser," Mrs. Flint's limited views do not allow her "to counsel and to screen" the innocent Jacobs. For this same reason, Mrs. Flint opposes Jacobs's efforts to set up a separate domestic space of her own. When Jacobs is courted by "a young colored carpenter" who hopes to purchase and marry her, she knows that she has "nothing to hope from my mistress"

Grimké compared the lot of white women to that of southern slaves (Andrews, To Tell a Free Story 247). In her essay, "The Great Lawsuit" (1843), Margaret Fuller also made this connection: "As the friend of the negro assumes that one man cannot by right hold another in bondage, [so] should the friend of woman assume that man cannot by right, lay even well-meant restrictions on woman. If the negro be a soul, if the woman be a soul, apparelled in the flesh, to one master only are they accountable" (1395).

(Jacobs 37). Mrs. Flint "would have been delighted to have got rid of me, but not in that way. . . . [M]y mistress, like many others, seemed to think that slaves had no right to any family ties of their own; that they were created merely to wait upon the family of the mistress" (37-38).

Both Flint's infidelity and his wife's attempts at discovery and revenge are played out within domestic space, which they attempt to manipulate to serve one end or another. When Flint's attempts to verbally seduce Jacobs fail, "the doctor . . . announced his intention to take his youngest daughter, then four years old, to sleep in his apartment. It was necessary that a servant should sleep in the same room, to be on hand if the child stirred. I was selected for that office, and informed for what purpose that arrangement had been made" (32). Jacobs does not spell out what the reader surely must know: that the doctor's "purpose" is the seduction of Jacobs, rather than the comfort of a crying child. Heretofore, Jacobs has avoided Flint by keeping "within sight of people as much as possible" during the day, and sleeping at the side of her great aunt at night. Though "too prudent to come into [the great aunt's] room," Flint orders Jacobs to abandon this refuge (32-33).

Salvation comes, not from her fellow slaves, but from the wildly jealous Mrs. Flint. Although this jealousy can scarcely bode well for Jacobs, it does effectually deter Dr. Flint: learning of the new sleeping arrangements, "[Mrs. Flint] now took me to sleep in a room adjoining her own" (34). Once in this room, Jacobs is "an object of her especial care, though not of her especial comfort, for she spent many a sleepless night to watch

over me" (34). Thus, like Douglass under the supervision of the slave-breaker Covey, Jacobs becomes an object of surveillance. In Douglass's Narrative, however, the surveillance and punishment of Douglass by Covey has the stated purpose of keeping the slave working and producing within the bounds of slave space. In Incidents, on the other hand, it is Jacobs's sexuality which is under constant surveillance. The exigent Flints expect her to "produce" both sexual gratification (in the case of Dr. Flint) and a guilty confession of that gratification (in the case of Mrs. Flint).

It is because the combination of domestic space and slave space produces an unresolvable contradiction, however, that the Flints' combined supervision of Jacobs works at cross purposes. Domestic space is not merely the space in which the family resides: it is also the site of licit (that is, conjugal) sexual relations. One of the chief functions of slave space, on the other hand, is its role as the site where the slave's body is exploited for the benefit of the slaveowner. The stated function of these two sites conflict when they are combined, for, although the exploitation of Jacobs's sexuality, like her labour, benefits her slave owner, its exploitation within the Flint household violates the purpose of domestic space.

Putting Jacobs in a room next to her own is Mrs. Flint's attempt to resolve this contradiction. Like Covey and the overseers of Douglass's Narrative, Mrs. Flint uses surveillance to keep Jacobs within the boundaries which indicate her status as a chattel. At the same time, however, sexual jealousy causes her to see Jacobs as her usurper. By attempting to maintain the boundary between herself and Jacobs within the same domestic

space, Mrs. Flint is confronted, not only by both the spatial contradictions of the slave-owning household, but by the contradictory nature of American slavery itself. Although Mrs. Flint attempts to keep Jacobs in her place as a chattel, the very fact that she also sees the slave as a rival is an implicit, though partial and inadvertent, acknowledgement of Jacobs's humanity, according the slave a quasi-subjectivity.

While Mrs. Flint uses surveillance to redouble her efforts to reinforce the boundary between herself and the slave/chattel, Dr. Flint ostensibly does the opposite, explicitly offering Jacobs a quasi-subjectivity as a reward for her submission. Indeed, the fact that she will not submit to seduction is a species of ingratitude, given the marks of favour already awarded her. "Did I not take you into the house, and make you the companion of my own children? . . . Have I ever treated you like a negro? . . . Only let me arrange matters in my own way. . . . you don't know what is for your own good. . . . I would make a lady of you" (35). Believing that Jacobs's continued resistance is caused by a fear of Mrs. Flint, the doctor develops another strategy. "[H]e told me that he was going to build a small house for me. . . . I was constrained to listen, while he talked of his intention to give me a home of my own, and to make a lady of me" (53).

Flint's blandishments, though they alternate with violent threats, make it clear that "lady" and "negro" are words not normally used in conjunction with each other; indeed, bearing as it does connotations of superiority of class and race and a limited, though still legitimately recognized subjectivity, "lady" is "negro's" antithesis. That "lady" also bears with it a necessary spatial component is not lost on Dr. Flint. A domestic space of her

own would be tangible evidence of Jacobs's favoured status. By reminding her of the already cautiously admitted "indulgences" she has received as his children's companion, Flint suggests that Jacobs's presence within his own domestic space has conveyed upon her a recognition far beyond that normally accorded the ordinary slave. One could even argue that, given the legal and social restrictions which enforced the dependence and confinement of white women at that time, the privileges of a concubine would be such that owning neither the proffered house nor her own body would be of no especial disadvantage.⁶

To conflate the disadvantages of slaves and white women, however, would be to elide the worst of the slave's experience. No matter how prized she is, Jacobs knows only too well that she will remain a commodity. Should she be coerced into submitting to her master's will, his favour, whether retained or withdrawn, will only result in additions to his livestock. "I shuddered to think of being the mother of children that should be owned by my old tyrant. I knew that as soon as a new fancy took him, his victims were sold far off to get rid of them; especially if they had children. I had seen several women sold, with his babies at the breast" (35). As Houston Baker points out, Jacobs "calls attention. . .to the surplus value deriving from the fruit of the slave woman's womb" in an economic system where "the black woman's value is the function of her womb" (*Blues, Ideology* 51). Black women "could not even claim their sexual organs as their own," Deborah Gray White

⁶ That white women were themselves victims of servitude was a point made by more than one nineteenth-century feminist. See note 5 above.

writes (173).

But if Jacobs cannot control the fact that her womb is the source of her master's economic enrichment, she can "thwart Flint's power of violation [if not his power of possession] by choosing, on her own initiative, the man who will actually father her child" (Baker, *Blues, Ideology* 53). "It seems less degrading to give one's self, than to submit to compulsion. There is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except that which he gains by kindness and attachment" (Jacobs 55). At the age of fifteen, therefore, Jacobs begins a liaison with a sympathetic white man, whom she refers to as Mr. Sands. "I will not try to screen myself behind the plea of compulsion from a master; for it was not so. Neither can I plead ignorance or thoughtlessness. . . .I knew what I did, and I did it with deliberate calculation" (54). The calculated loss of her virtue to Sands seems to be Jacobs's best hope of protection, for it could prompt Flint to sell her in a fit of jealous rage. Should Sands then buy her she would be free from Flint's harassment.

Although Jacobs accepts responsibility for her actions, she leaves no doubt that slavery provided her with a powerful motive:

O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the laws; . . . but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery (54).

Jacobs makes it clear that the right to choose and enter a domestic space is essential to the

preservation of sexual purity. The perversity of the slave system lies in that it does not only deny Jacobs her rightful refuge: it also makes her entrance into what is normally designated as a shelter of purity dependent upon her concubinage and the continuance of her chatteldom. Interestingly, however, she does not acknowledge that her white, middle-class counterpart's ability to choose "the objects of your affection," could be limited by parental control and/or economics, nor does she hint that the traditional, patriarchal model of marriage may oppress women even when it is not affected by the presence of slavery. This is not, I believe, because Jacobs idealizes marriage: rather, the omission highlights the oppression of black women, since it compares the stark reality of that oppression to a particular cultural ideal.

If Jacobs's plea for the reader's understanding is eloquent it is also a double-edged sword: although she is critical of the system which would deprive her of a domestic space of her own, her admission of sexual impropriety must surely place Jacobs beyond the pale of the virtuous, middle-class women with whom she has so daringly claimed kinship and whom she hoped to win over with her narrative. Indeed, Jacobs decision to become Sands' mistress only confirms that she cannot be accepted into the ranks of True Womanhood. Although Jacobs roundly criticizes, in the shape of Mrs. Flint, True Womanhood's privileging of white-skinned fragility, her plea for forgiveness shows that she cannot so easily dismiss its most stringent prerequisite: sexual purity.

The absence of purity in a woman was deemed "unnatural and unfeminine."

Barbara Welter writes that, without purity, a woman "was, in fact, no woman at all, but a

member of some lower order" (23). Of course, for the dominant culture, Jacobs *is* of a lower order: a slave, and therefore an inferior, she has confirmed her inferiority by affirming the connections commonly made between her race and sexuality. How then, is she to prove that she deserves a domestic space of her own?

In the words of William L. Andrews, Jacobs is unable "to reconcile an absolute moral standard for womanly virtue prescribed by white culture with the actual circumstances of a slave woman's complex lived experience" ("Changing Moral Discourse" 230). In spite of her argument that it is precisely the violation of her right to marry and enter into a domestic space of her own which causes her downfall, Jacobs's decision to accept responsibility for that downfall suggests that she must offer proof of her worthiness. It is for this reason that Andrews argues that "the extent to which [Jacobs] was able to escape the ambivalence and contradictoriness of her own moral position to articulate an alternative standard of morality for black women in slavery remains a matter of debate" (230).

Unlike Andrews however, Hazel Carby insists that "Jacobs used the material circumstances of her life to critique conventional standards of female behaviour and to question their relevance and applicability to the experience of black women" (47). Supporting Carby's argument, in the midst of Jacobs's lengthy, humble *mea culpa*, is a frank declaration that Jacobs's case must surely be an exception: "There may be some sophistry in all this; but the condition of a slave confuses all principles of morality, and, in fact, renders the practice of them impossible. . . .I know I did wrong. No one can feel it

more sensibly than I do Still, in looking back, calmly, on the events of my life, I feel that the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others" (Jacobs 55-56).

Although I agree that this declaration offers a definite critique of those standards which would condemn her, I must also agree with Andrews' contention that Jacobs's struggle to adopt a new, more inclusive standard of morality is filled with ambivalence. In the first part of the narrative Jacobs struggles with her inability to live up to conventional standards of virtue. In spite of this, she subsequently overcomes this ambivalence and presents herself, not as a "fallen" woman, but as an exemplary mother who makes effort after effort to construct her own domestic space, so that the children may have a homeplace of their own. By the end of the narrative "[t]he consequences of the loss of innocence, Linda Brent's (and Jacobs's) children, rather than being presented as the fruits of her shame, were her links to life and the motivating force of an additional determination to be free" (Carby 59).

Jacobs's initial ambivalence stems from her failure to live up to her grandmother's expectations. Pursued by Dr. Flint, Jacobs fears not only his wrath but also her grandmother's response to any suspicion of sexual misconduct on her part: "although my grandmother was all in all to me, I feared her as well as loved her I was very young, and felt shamefaced about telling her such impure things, especially as I knew her to be very strict on such subjects" (28-27). Her sexual indiscretion and its resultant pregnancy make her feel that she is "no longer worthy of [the grandmother's] love" (56). When

Jacobs confesses her worst fears are realized: like the "abandoned [white] woman" of Mary Chesnut's diary entry, she is cast out of her grandmother's "decent" house.

I went to my grandmother. My lips moved to make confession, but the words stuck in my throat. . . .Presently in came my mistress. . . .and accused me concerning her husband. My grandmother, whose suspicions had been previously awakened, believed what she said. . . .She tore from my fingers my mother's wedding ring and her silver thimble. 'Go away!' she exclaimed, 'and never come to my house, again.' . . . How I longed to throw myself at her feet, and tell her all the truth! But she had ordered me to go and never to come there again. . . .With what feelings did I now close that little gate, which I used to open with such an eager hand in childhood! It closed upon me with a sound I never heard before (57).

The grandmother's homeplace is the only space described thus far where Jacobs's right to occupy a domestic space is fully recognized. For the first time, however, the basis of that recognition is implicitly questioned. The stripping away of the wedding ring and thimble -- symbols of conjugal sanctity and domesticity -- suggests that, while the grandmother's recognition of Jacobs's right to occupy such space is not based upon whiteness, it *is*, even here, based upon conventional notions of chastity and domestic service. By taking the ring and the thimble away and forcing her granddaughter out of the house, the grandmother effectively withdraws this recognition and Jacobs, like "abandoned [white] woman" of Chesnut's diary entry, is cast out.

It is for this reason that I find Frances Smith Foster's interpretation of Incidents somewhat problematic. Although I agree that Jacobs's autobiography critiques the cult of True Womanhood (in the shape of Mrs. Flint), Foster's unproblematized division between True Womanhood and Real Women (such as the grandmother) fails to take into account

the great value the grandmother places on chastity -- the one possession which, as I have already noted, is essential to True Womanhood. The fact that Jacobs has to struggle to regain her grandmother's recognition suggests that this alternative to True Womanhood is not readily apparent in the narrative; rather, it must be developed by Jacobs herself as her story progresses. Although the grandmother's nurturance may form a basis for an alternative womanhood, her attachment to some of the unrealistic values of True Womanhood (including chastity in a milieu in which sexual coercion was as much the rule as an exception) eventually makes Jacobs espouse alternative values in spite, rather than because, of her grandmother's example. "Out of the moment of her most intense isolation Jacobs made her narrator forge her own rules of behavior and conduct of which even her grandmother would disapprove" (Carby 57).

The grandmother's decision to accept her granddaughter back into the fold is the first step towards recognizing an acceptable standard of womanhood which is not based solely upon chastity. In begging her grandmother for pity and forgiveness Jacobs, in effect, repeats the appeal she has already made to the reader. Her desire for "pity" is really a desire for understanding and recognition. "And she [grandmother] did pity me," Jacobs writes. "She did not say 'I forgive you;' but she looked at me lovingly, with her eyes full of tears" (Jacobs 57). Even as Jacobs is granted permission to enter the homeplace again - a permission which, on a larger scale, she desires for all enslaved African American women -- this omission remains troubling. That the grandmother's forgiveness is not verbally given suggests a continued, though muted, ambivalence: if Jacobs retains her

claim to recognition and sisterhood, she does so in spite of a behaviour which, however understandable, cannot be condoned.

Although Jacobs's readmission into her grandmother's domestic space signals the continued recognition of a "real womanhood" which, virtuous or not, is denied elsewhere, this readmission apparently comes at a price. While her calculated manoeuvres have effected her removal from slave space into her grandmother's home (Dr. Flint informs her that, "Your mistress, disgusted by your conduct, forbids you to return to the house"), Jacobs's removal to her grandmother's domestic space causes the disruption of what was once an undisturbed homeplace (59). Because Jacobs is Flint's property, it may be argued that her presence now makes her grandmother's home a slave space: although the house legally belongs to her grandmother, the grandmother can neither bar Flint's access nor protect Jacobs and her children from his harassment. Although the loss of her chastity does not cause Jacobs to die or go mad, as it does the heroines of the era's sentimental novels, it would seem that she cannot finally escape the shadow of the sentimental heroine's fate: her loss of virtue does bring with it the punishing invasion of what was once a secure homeplace. "I wondered that it did not lessen [grandmother's] love for me; but if it did she never showed it" (82).

I would argue, however, that Jacobs largely contains her ambivalence at this point, thus forestalling this interpretation. She does this by reminding the reader of the perils that even "free" African Americans experienced in slave states. The small percentage of African Americans who were legally free were so disadvantaged (paupers

could be reenslaved and all were required to show free papers on demand) that the dividing line between free and slave, and thus between free space and slave space, was murky at best. No matter what their legal status, the domestic spaces of African Americans were not inviolate: even without Jacobs's presence the grandmother's house is not entirely a "free" space, since it may be subjected to the same surveillance as the slave quarters.

That this lawful, and therefore terrifying, permeability of the walls of the homeplace is the result of the institution of slavery, rather than any action Jacobs might have taken, is made clear in Jacobs's account of current events. "Not far from this time," she writes, "[news of] Nat Turner's insurrection threw our town into great commotion."

I knew the houses would be searched; and I expected it would be done by country bullies and the poor whites The dwellings of the colored people, unless they happened to be protected by some influential white person, who was nigh at hand, were robbed of clothing and every thing else the marauders thought worth carrying away (63-64).

Jacobs astutely recognizes that poor whites "exulted in such a chance to exercise a little brief authority. . . not reflecting that the power which trampled on the colored people also kept themselves in poverty, ignorance, and moral degradation" (64). Knowing that they would take the opportunity to assert their perceived supremacy, Jacobs prepares the house in a gesture of defiance. "I knew nothing annoyed them so much as to see colored people living in comfort and respectability; so I made arrangements for them with especial care I put white quilts on the beds, and decorated some of the rooms with flowers"

(63). The linens, silver and preserves are all appurtenances of middle-class domestic spaces: by highlighting both their presence and the mob's open-mouthed jealousy and resentful wonderment, Jacobs subtly aligns herself with her middle-class readers, who occupy such spaces. She further accentuates class differences by rendering the dialogue of the "low whites" in dialect (she and her grandmother speak standard English) and by depicting the mob's ignorance (they must have every scrap of writing they find read to them by their captain). These class differences can only work to her advantage, since they serve to undercut the racial solidarity her audience might have with the upper-class slaveholders, who have used this same solidarity to press the mob into service. How, it is implied, could one sympathize with a group which would send a mob to despoil a home so very much like one's own? Indeed, "the white citizens found that their own property was not safe from the lawless rabble they had summoned to protect them." The "drunken swarm" must be driven back into the country (67).

If the searchers are used to desecrate the domestic spaces of African Americans, they also destroy the one public space where African Americans may be recognized, by each other at least, as subjects, rather than objects.

The slaves begged the privilege of again meeting at their little church in the woods, with their burying ground around it. It was built by the colored people, and they had no higher happiness than to meet there and sing hymns together, and pour out their hearts in spontaneous prayer. Their request was denied, and the church was demolished. They were permitted to attend the white churches, a certain portion of the galleries being appropriated to their use. There, when every body else had partaken of the communion, and the benediction had been pronounced, the minister said, "Come down, now, my colored friends" (67).

Outside of their fragile domestic spaces, the church was the most important space for African Americans, for here worship became an act, not only of praise, but of the meeting of equals who recognized each other's humanity. In the wake of lay preacher Nat Turner's Old Testament inspired revolt, however, slaveowners realized that this combination of recognized subjectivity and spatial proximity could carry within it the seeds of rebellion. The message that was received, along with the population that received it, had to be closely monitored. Seated in the galleries of white churches, the slaves were physically reminded, as they were during the week day, of their inferior status. Offered as it is after the benediction, their communion is a mockery of the "commemoration of the meek and lowly Jesus, who said, 'God is your Father, and all ye are brethren'" (67).

Jacobs's account of the slaveholder's religion is as satirical as Frederick Douglass's. The slaveholders, she writes caustically, "came to the conclusion that it would be well to give the slaves enough of religious instruction to keep them from murdering their masters" (68). Having decided to serve God by serving their own self-interests, Episcopalian slaveholders are particularly exercised about finding a suitable space in which to provide this instruction: "The Methodist and Baptist churches admitted [African Americans] in the afternoon; but their carpets and cushions were not so costly as those at the Episcopal church. It was at last decided that they should meet at the house of a free colored man who was a member" (68). Here again the domestic space of an ostensibly "free" man is permeated and appropriated, however non-violently, by slaveowners who desire to use it for their own purposes.

The Episcopal minister's sermon turns out to be a litany of admonitions detailing the slaves' multitudinous sins, including quarrelling, loitering, shirking and petty theft. Clearly religious instruction is being used as a means of surveillance: each rebuke ends with the refrain, "God sees you." The slaves are enjoined to "forsake [their] sinful ways, and be faithful servants If you disobey your earthly master, you offend your heavenly Master. You must obey God's commandments. When you go from here, don't stop at the corners of the streets to talk, but go directly home, and let your master and mistress see that you have come" (69). The sermon demarcates the boundaries of slave space, warning slaves away from dangerous spaces, the "back streets, or among the bushes" (69), those margins which, as promiscuous thoroughfares or places hidden from view, might give them a chance to conspire against the slaveowners and the boundaries set by them.

It is not surprising that the minister soon changes the location of the meeting:

[He] informed us that he found it very inconvenient to meet at the friend's house, and he should be glad to see us, every Sunday evening, at his own kitchen.

I went home with the feeling that I had heard the Reverend Mr. Pike for the last time. Some of his members repaired to his house. . . .It was so long before the reverend gentleman descended from his comfortable parlor that the slaves left, and went to enjoy a Methodist shout (69).

The kitchen is well within the bounds of slave space. Given that the religious instruction they are to receive is designed to resign them to its constraints, it is not surprising that this instruction should be given within its boundaries. That the slaves should leave for a "Methodist shout" is a subtle sign of their recalcitrance: the spiritual democracy of repentance and unrestrained religious fervour is more attractive than the harangues which

try to mould them into profitable and obedient slaves. When Jacobs defies the law by finding "a quiet nook, where no intruder was likely to penetrate" to teach a fellow slave to read, she affirms the importance of those "back streets[and] . . . bushes" on the margins of slave space where slaves, if they could not establish a public space of their own, could still recognize in each other the subjectivity not legally accorded them (72).

Jacobs survives the militia's search and the destruction of the community church physically unscathed and, shortly thereafter, gives birth to another child. Her exasperated master decides that she must no longer be allowed to remain in the limbo that is her grandmother's domestic space: "I will procure a cottage, where you and the children can live together. Your labour shall be light, such as sewing for my family. Think what is offered you, Linda -- a home and freedom!" (83). Since this "freedom" -- which probably does not include legal manumission -- is, like the domestic space that goes with it, based upon her own concubinage, Jacobs again refuses. Flint retaliates by sending her to his son's plantation, "there to remain till your young mistress [Flint's daughter, Jacobs's legal owner] is married; and your children shall fare like the rest of the Negro children" (84). This last proviso carries within it a veiled threat: added to the neglected crowd in the yard, (a condition characteristic of Frederick Douglass's childhood) the children will most certainly be either sold or sent into the fields to labour.

This decision to make Jacobs return to slave space is an attempt to "[break] her in," to break what she proudly acknowledges to be a "determined will" (85-86). Since a slave, by definition, can have no free will, Dr. Flint makes sure that Jacobs's only choice is

subjection. That she chooses the worst of the choices offered no doubt strikes him as perverse, given the tangible, if ultimately uncertain, privileges of concubinage. Jacobs's choice, however, proves her to be anything but submissive: her decision to go to the plantation once again thwarts her master's desire, for Dr. Flint's fear that his son should prove to be his sexual rival has already prompted him to recall her after a previous stay (84).

At the plantation Jacobs fills the position her Aunt Nancy did in Dr. Flint's household. "My task was to fit up the house for the reception of the bride," she writes. "In the midst of sheets, tablecloths, towels, drapery, and carpeting, my head was as busy planning, as were my fingers with the needle" (86). Once the young Mr. Flint marries, his wife becomes Jacobs's *de facto* mistress. "I was not exactly appointed maid of all work; but I was to do whatever I was told" (93). When the senior Flints arrive for dinner Jacobs, who waits on the table, is "drilled like a disgraced soldier" to reinforce her subjugation (93).

Jacobs bears the rigours of her new situation well until she learns that her children will be sent to join her. "I saw through the plan. They thought my children's being there would fetter me to the spot, and that it was a good place to break us all in to abject submission to our lot as slaves" (94). Initially, she plans "to conceal myself at the house of a friend, and remain there for a few weeks till the search [is] over" (91). She hopes that Dr. Flint, "for fear of losing my value," will put her and her children up for sale, "and I knew somebody would buy us" (91). The "somebody," of course, is Mr. Sands. Jacobs's

grandmother attempts to dissuade her. "Nobody respects a mother who forsakes her children; and if you leave them, you will never have a happy moment. If you go, you will make me miserable the short time I have to live. You would be taken and brought back, and your sufferings would be dreadful" (91).

As she did when Jacobs initially confessed her loss of chastity, the grandmother once again holds her granddaughter to conventional standards of virtue. A good mother, the grandmother implies, sacrifices her chance to gain her freedom to protect her children. That these are the values of True Womanhood is made evident when Mrs. Flint coarsely echoes this sentiment after Jacobs disappears: "She hasn't so much feeling for her children as a cow has for its calf. If she had, she would have come back long ago" (102). In spite of her grandmother's rebuke, Jacobs does not internalize these values as she once did. Instead, she draws strength, not from the homeplace which, for all its comforts, would impose self-defeating strictures upon her, but from the forsaken, though still sacred, ground surrounding the slaves' former church. "For more than ten years I had frequented this spot, but never had it seemed to me so sacred as now. . . .As I passed the wreck of the old meeting house, where, before Nat Turner's time, the slaves had been allowed to meet for worship, I seemed to hear my father's voice coming from it, bidding me not to tarry till I reached freedom or the grave" (90-91). While Jacobs does not reject her grandmother's homeplace -- indeed, it remains an indispensable base of support -- she once again questions the applicability of its values: much like the preservation of chastity, the expectation that she should stay with her children to protect them is scarcely relevant,

given the fact that the legal rights of the owner render the slave mother largely unable to control her children's future.

Jacobs flees the Flint plantation and hides in the house of a friend. When the search intensifies she conceals herself in a snake-infested thicket nearby. She is forced back into the house by a debilitating snakebite which, coupled with the continuing search, pins her down to her uncertain hiding place. "When my friend contrived to make known to my relatives the painful situation I had been in for twenty-four hours, they said no more about my going back to my master" (99). In desperation, Jacobs's grandmother confides in one of her customers, a woman who herself is the wife of a slaveholder. "She [the grandmother's confidant] also held a number [of slaves] in her own name; but she treated them kindly, and would never allow any of them to be sold. She was unlike the majority of slaveholder's wives" (99). Warning that any suspicion that she had helped a runaway slave "would ruin me and my family," the slaveholder's wife nonetheless offers Jacobs a temporary refuge.

This extraordinary act is easily explainable: the slaveholder's wife has "known [Jacobs's grandmother] from childhood, and always been very friendly to her. She had also known my mother and her children, and felt interested for them" (99). Familiarity, in this case, has bred a limited form of respect: for this woman, the former slave is "Aunt" Marthy, indication of the grandmother's standing in the community. Much like Mrs. Flint's position of foster-daughter, this quasi-familial relationship binds this anonymous woman to Jacobs's grandmother. Unlike the relationship shared with Mrs. Flint, however, this bond

is not distorted by the material concerns of ownership: rather, it more closely mimics the sisterly relationship Jacobs would claim with her readers. Although Jacobs does not condone the woman's ownership of slaves, this woman, her cook, Jacobs's grandmother, and Jacobs herself form the first links of a nascent sisterhood.

Jacobs's benefactress has a cook named Betty, who acts as her accomplice. It is Betty who brings Jacobs to her new hiding place under cover of night.

We reached the house and entered unobserved. [Betty's] first words were: "honey, now you is safe. Dem devils ain't coming to search *dis* house. When I get you into missis' safe place, I will bring some nice hot supper." . . . The mistress came to meet us, and led me up stairs to a small room over her own sleeping apartment (100).

While this sequestration effectively exempts Jacobs from the slave system, it introduces into the domestic space a contradiction as troubling as that which had so disrupted the Flint household. Although the domestic space of this slaveowner/benefactress is not subject to arbitrary search and depredation by a vengeful militia, it is still slave space, making Jacobs's "safe place" subject to intrusions from the system in which the household as a whole participates. How can the mistress maintain her authority over her slaves if it is revealed that she herself has allowed a slave to subvert it? It is not only the possible charge of theft which prompts her to remind Jacobs that, "you must be very careful, for my sake as well as your own; and you must never tell my secret; for it would ruin me and my family" (100). Indeed, Betty, the mistress's most trusted servant and confidant, expresses a desire to cross the well-patrolled boundary between slave and free when she finally bids Jacobs goodbye: "I'se *so* glad you is gwine to free parts! Don't forget ole

Betty. P'raps I'll come 'long by and by" (111). To help Jacobs without endangering her own position, Jacobs's benefactress must survey the boundaries between "slave" space and "free" space, carefully demarcating the boundaries between the fugitive Jacobs and her enslaved maidservants. Like Mrs. Flint, who used similar tactics to ensure Jacobs's subjection, the mistress uses surveillance and spatial proximity to patrol this boundary, keeping the "free" Jacobs from contact with her enslaved (and possibly betraying) counterparts.

Jacobs is neither entirely free nor totally enslaved in this attic room: she refers to her "safe retreat" as "a little cell" (100). When Flint claims to have discovered her hiding place, Betty takes Jacobs "across the yard, into the kitchen" and hides her in yet another prison, under a plank in the floor. "A buffalo skin and a bit of carpet were spread for me to lie on, and a quilt thrown over me 'If dey *did* know whar you are, dey won't know *now*. . . . If dey comes rummagin 'mong *my* tings, dey'll get one bressed sarssin from dis 'ere nigger'" (103). Even though the kitchen, as slave space, is as much subject to search as the grandmother's house, it is also strongly, if uncertainly, protected by custom.

Relegated to these separate spaces, black women claimed them as their own. When, at the end of the Civil War, Mary Chesnut ventured into the kitchen to make "a pound cake in honor of Mrs. Cuthbert," her cook Molly "was not grateful for our aid. Said we did not help -- we *hindered* her -- and threatened, if we did not keep out of her kitchen, to pin the dish rag to Serena" (Chesnut, Civil War 682). To support their claims to this space, cooks drew on the ideology of True Womanhood: Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes that

plantation mistress Caroline Merrick was "denied access [to the kitchen] by her cook, who, having been twelve years in training, scorned her inexperienced youth" and warned her away from the kitchen fires, which would redden her complexion (Within the Plantation Household 142). Although it serves as a protective homeplace, the kitchen is now a space in which Jacobs must hide, rather than inhabit.

Although the alarm proves to be a false one, Jacobs leaves the house of her benefactress to hide in the swamp while she waits for her uncle to prepare what turns out to be a long-standing hiding place: a windowless crawl space above her grandmother's house. Nine feet long, seven feet wide and, at its highest point, three feet high, it will be Jacobs's hiding place for nearly seven years. The attic space is completely dark until Jacobs finds a gimlet stuck in the roof and, with it, manages to bore a hole in the wall under the eaves. Although Jacobs manages to observe her children through this aperture, she cannot make herself known to them. As Karen Sanchez-Eppler has observed, "the peephole [Jacobs] bores in the wall of her grandmother's attic does not provide her with a view of the house's interior" -- an indication that a true home, for Jacobs, remains as elusive as ever (87-88). Nonetheless, this opening provides enough light by which to sew, read and write. It is with this last activity that Jacobs makes another attempt to secure her freedom.

To draw Flint's attention away from the immediate area, Jacobs writes letters addressed to Dr. Flint and her grandmother. Postdated, the letters are carried north and mailed from New York by a trustworthy seaman. Flint conceals the grandmother's letter

and offers her another version, in which Jacobs begs to have her children sent to her "in New York or Philadelphia, whichever place best suits my uncle's convenience" (Jacobs 130). Flint fails to convince Jacobs's uncle to go to Boston (Jacobs's supposed place of residence) to bring her south. He then claims to have written the city's mayor to ascertain Jacobs's whereabouts. Although this worries the grandmother, who is afraid that the ruse will be exposed, Jacobs rightly supposes that "The fact that Dr. Flint had written to the mayor of Boston convinced me that he believed my letter to be genuine, and of course that he had no suspicion of my being any where in the vicinity" (132). Literate and keen to pick up any such information, Jacobs has already heard that public opinion in Massachusetts would prevent Flint from going to recapture her: "This was before the Fugitive Slave Law was passed; before Massachusetts had consented to become a 'nigger hunter' for the south" (131).

It is Jacobs's act of writing and its location which has attracted the attention of contemporary criticism, for, although her letters are no longer extant, her later description of their writing can most obviously be linked to a larger trend in nineteenth-century women's writing. In her introduction to Incidents, Jean Fagan Yellin has written that "In [Jacobs's] hand, the madwoman in the attic sanely plots for her freedom" (Yellin, "Introduction" xxxiii). What Yellin alludes to is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's groundbreaking study of nineteenth-century women's literature, The Madwoman in the Attic. In their readings of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Dickinson and other writers, the authors trace repeated "[i]mages of enclosure and escape" in writings of

women, who were "[b]oth . . . literally and figuratively confined" in "the architecture of an overwhelmingly male-dominated society" (Gilbert and Gubar xi). But, as Yellin's remark indicates, Jacobs's experience was radically different from the white middle-class artists of Gilbert and Gubar's study. As Valerie Smith has noted, Jacobs

[r]epeatedly. . . escapes overwhelming persecutions only by choosing her own space of confinement: the stigma of unwed motherhood over sexual submission to her master; concealment in one friend's home, another friend's closet, and her grandmother's garret over her own and her children's enslavement on a plantation; Jim Crowism and the threat of the Fugitive Slave Law in the North over institutionalized slavery at home. . . . [E]ach moment of apparent enclosure actually empowers Jacobs to redirect her own and her children's destiny ("Loopholes" 213).

What Jacobs aspires to is a space in which her womanhood, and thus her humanity, is recognized: the protected domestic space, far from being a prison, is the space of that recognition. She does not gain this recognition in the attic: hidden, her very existence is effaced even as her position allows her to elude chattledom. Nonetheless, the space is a "loophole of retreat"--a phrase which, Smith writes, refers to both "a place of withdrawal, [and also]. . . in common parlance [,] an avenue of escape" (212). Donald Gibson writes that "a loophole is also a small opening in a *fortress* wall through which arms may be fired, a place allowing defensive action, and also, because it conceals observer from observed, unobserved offensive action" (170). Jacobs uses the space to write herself free. In her letters to her grandmother, which she knows will be intercepted by Flint, she depicts herself as a free woman occupying free space. Jacobs writes a free self and, by doing so, deflects attention from her hiding place. This creates a diversion which will eventually

allow her to escape from the larger slave space of her home state into the free space of New York, thus becoming the self she has already written into being.

Flint tries to coerce Jacobs into returning by imprisoning both her children and her brother. When this fails, he offers the children up for sale. As Jacobs had hoped, they are bought by their father, Sands, and returned to her grandmother's home. "Great was the joy in my grandmother's house! . . . The father was present for a while; and though such a 'parental relation' as existed between him and my children takes slight hold of the hearts or consciences of slaveholders, it must be that he experienced some moments of pure joy in witnessing the happiness he had imparted" (107). The father's presence in the homeplace is ambiguous for, like Mrs. Flint and Jacobs's first mistress, both of whom were Jacobs's mother's foster sisters, Sands cannot be depended upon to privilege familial ties over those of ownership. Indeed, even though he takes their daughter Ellen into his home, he has the older slave child tend his legitimate daughter, her own white half-sister. Sands reneges on his promise to emancipate his daughter: Jacobs later finds that the child has been given to the Hobbs family as "a nice waiting maid" for their eldest daughter (166). Jacobs is only able to retrieve the girl because Sands, trying to avoid scandal, has had the children's bill of sale made out in Jacobs's grandmother's name.

Finally, one of Jacobs's friends secures her passage on the ship of a sympathetic captain. On the voyage north she encounters a friend, who, like herself, has remained concealed for some time in her mother's house. The two women are brought safely to the north. Overcome with emotion, Jacobs "called Fanny to see the sun rise, for the first time

in our lives, on free soil, for such *then* I believed it to be" (153). But if Douglass's 1845 Narrative creates a picture of a subjectivity which is almost immediately established by the creation of a domestic space, Jacobs's narrative, like My Bondage and My Freedom, immediately notes the difference between the freedom she has so eagerly anticipated and the restrictions she encounters. Jacobs's description of her joyful first sight of the north is tempered by her later realization that the "free states" accord African Americans only a nominal and severely circumscribed freedom. "I verily believed myself to be a free woman," she writes of her first night in the house of a helpful abolitionist (161). When Jacobs buys a train ticket for her trip to New York, however, she finds that "colored people" are banned from first-class railway cars. "This," she writes, "was the first chill to my enthusiasm about the Free States. Colored people were allowed to ride in a filthy box, behind white people, at the south, but there they were not required to pay for the privilege. It made me sad to find how the north aped the customs of slavery" (162-163). Nominally free, African Americans in the north are still confined to spaces which serve to indicate their position as the "other."

The thoroughness of this segregation becomes apparent when Jacobs travels with her employer, Mrs. Bruce, as a nursemaid. Unlike white servants of her station, she is not allowed to sit at the hotel dinner table to feed both her charge and herself. When Jacobs refuses to eat in the kitchen her meals are sent up to her, provoking discontent on behalf of the white hotel staff, who say "they were not hired to wait on negroes," and of "the colored servants of other borders [who] were dissatisfied because all were not treated

alike" (176-177). Like Frederick Douglass, who insisted on sitting in a first-class railway car, Jacobs resolves not to submit to segregation: "colored servants ought to be dissatisfied with *themselves*, for not having too much self-respect to submit to such treatment." She avers that, should African Americans refuse to submit to segregation they would "cease to be trampled under foot by [their] oppressors" (177). Even when she is not shown separate and unequal accommodations, however, her place is fixed: "Being in servitude to the Anglo-Saxon race, I was not put into a 'Jim Crow car,' on our way to Rockaway, neither was I invited to ride through the streets on the top of trunks in a truck; but everywhere I found the same manifestations of that cruel prejudice" (176).

What lends authority to Jacobs's comments on the nature of northern prejudice and American injustice in general is not only her own experience but her ability to compare the American scene with what she has witnessed abroad. With Mrs. Bruce dead, Jacobs travels with Mr. Bruce and his infant daughter to England, where she stays for ten months. By describing her travels, Jacobs echos a theme which appears in Douglass's My Bondage and My Freedom and other slave narratives: the ex-slave's discovery of a truly free space in the land from which white Americans had won their freedom. But, while Douglass's description of his trip abroad concentrates on his access to free space, Incidents takes particular account of working-class domestic space. In her capacity as nursemaid, she "had little opportunity to see the wonders of [London]" but spent a great deal of time in a town in Berkshire "said to be the poorest in the country" (185).

The people I saw around me were . . . among the poorest poor. But when

I visited them in their little thatched cottages, I felt that the condition of even the meanest and most ignorant among them was vastly superior to the condition of the most favoured slaves in America . . . Their homes were very humble; but they were protected by law. No insolent patrols could come, in the dead of night, and flog them at their pleasure. The father, when he closed his cottage door, felt safe with his family around him The relations of husband and wife, parent and child, were too sacred for the richest noble in the land to violate with impunity (184).

William Wells Brown, a fugitive slave who spent five years in Europe, described the domestic spaces of the English working class in a similar fashion. "I was taught in America that the English laborer was no better of than the slave upon a Carolina rice-field. I had seen the slaves in Missouri huddled together, three, four, and even five families in a single room, not more than fifteen by twenty-five feet square, and I had expected to see the same in England." Instead, Brown viewed a whitewashed cottage that presented "as fine a picture of neatness, order and comfort, as the most fastidious taste could wish to see" (American Fugitive 126). Neither Brown nor Jacobs describes the housing in larger, industrial centres, however. Still, these descriptions of English peasant life serve their purpose, since they champion the American slave's right to the ownership and occupation of a private, domestic space and contradict pro-slavery arguments that slaves are better off.

In spite of the fact that Jacobs herself has attained "free" space in the north, the possession of a domestic space of her own eludes her. Like Douglass, Jacobs spends her first few days in the north in the home of a relatively prosperous African American abolitionist. After his arrival in the north, however, Douglass is almost immediately able

to set out, his new wife in tow, to emulate the domestic space his new friends and northern counterparts have already created -- a space which, it will be remembered, is prime evidence of their subjectivity. The economics of freedom grant Jacobs no such boon: even when she is out of the clutches of her owner, her woman's wages are insufficient to establish a domestic space of her own. Of her first meeting with her own free counterpart, Mrs. Durham, Jacobs writes: "She was surrounded by her husband and children, in a home made sacred by protecting laws. I thought of my own children, and sighed" (160). Without the protection of a home, Jacobs's daughter Ellen is forced to remain as a servant in the Hobbs' home. Like her mother before her, Ellen depends on her mother for clothing and other necessities and is subjected to sexual abuse: Mr. Thorne, a southerner and relative of Mrs. Hobbs, "pour[s] vile language into the ears" of the child, even as he professes regard for her great-grandmother. Jacobs manages to maintain a domestic space for her children only once: forced to leave New York after her whereabouts have been betrayed to the Flints by Thorne, Jacobs "accepted the offer of a friend, that we should share expenses and keep house together. . . .[F]or the first time during many years, I had both my children together with me" (182). The home only lasts the winter: Jacobs, finding that she "could earn more . . . [as a nursemaid] than I could by my needle," is forced to leave her children in school while she returns to her employer. In spite of Jacobs's freedom, servitude proves to be more profitable than entrepreneurship.

Though Mr. Bruce's second wife eventually purchases Jacobs's freedom, Jacobs's greatest dream remains unfulfilled: "The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit

with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble. I wish it for my children's sake far more than for my own" (201). Her longing is palpable -- she repeats the words "my own" three times. The domestic space Jacobs inhabits is not slave space -- but it is not her own. Exchanging slavery for wage labour she is, nonetheless, still excluded from the domestic ideology which she apparently espouses. Sarah Josepha Hale and others saw the home as a refuge from the "contagion" of money-making; Jacobs, a single mother, must strive to earn money in someone else's house. Even if one could argue that the acquisition of her own hearthstone is within the realm of possibility (and there is some evidence that, in later years, she does eventually acquire it), Jacobs's "story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage" (201). Can she, even as a free woman, finally be fully recognized as a woman and a subject when she does not yet have that most basic of requirements, the space which serves as evidence that she has been recognized as such? The answer to this question is ambiguous at best. Jacobs is tied to her employer and social superior Mrs. Bruce by (presumably economic) "circumstances" as well as "[l]ove, duty [and] gratitude" -- reasons reminiscent of the slaveholder's paternalist ideology (201). In spite of this, Jacobs takes care to report Mrs. Bruce's assertion that she "did not buy [Jacobs] for [her] services. I should have done just the same, if you had been going to sail for California tomorrow. I should, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that you left me a free woman" (200). This implies recognition of Jacobs as a person, rather than a chattel, a condition which provides an acceptable, though not entirely satisfactory, ending: without a homeplace of her own and

relegated to "Jim Crow" spaces on trains and in hotels, she still apparently awaits full recognition of her equality. Freedom in the North, Jacobs writes, is "a vast improvement in *my* condition," though it says little for the standards of justice in the country as a whole (201).

FIVE

Private Spaces, Public Meanings: Elizabeth Keckley's

Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House

Harriet Jacobs concluded Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl by expressing her desire for a homeplace of her own, a space to which freedom alone did not guarantee access. The scanty records which document the rest of Jacobs's life, however, indicate that she finally may have found some measure of the economic independence which would make her desire possible: in 1870 she ran a boarding house in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1878 Jacobs and her daughter Louisa ("Ellen" in Incidents) moved to Washington, D.C., where they lived until Jacobs's death in 1897.

This was not the first time Jacobs lived in Washington: at the height of the Civil War she did relief work among the city's increasing population of "contrabands" -- refugee slaves who had managed to reach the Union lines. Although her book would later fade into an obscurity from which it has only recently been recovered, its initial publication in 1861 sparked enough interest to prompt an English edition the next year and "Linda Jacobs," as she became known, became a recognizable figure in abolitionist circles. Her relative prominence, coupled with her extensive relief work, makes it more than probable that Jacobs became acquainted with another ex-slave named Elizabeth Keckley, who would soon write an autobiography of her own. A successful seamstress and dress

designer who was regularly employed by President Lincoln's wife and other members of the Washington élite, Keckley was a prominent member of the city's African American community and the founder and past president of the city's Contraband Relief Association. Aside from occupation (Jacobs also occasionally worked as a seamstress), former condition, and relief work, the two shared at least one acquaintance: Frederick Douglass was known to both women before he himself moved to Washington in 1870.

Although Keckley's narrative Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House (1868) appeared only seven years after Incidents, only three of its eighteen chapters deal with her life as a slave -- a fact all the more remarkable when one recalls that, like Douglass and Jacobs, and unlike authors of later postbellum autobiographies such as Booker T. Washington, Keckley spent a significant portion of her life in bondage. Born circa 1818 in Virginia, Keckley was in her forties when she finally managed to earn enough money to buy freedom for herself and her son. Although her manumission papers are dated 1855, she worked arduously for five more years to pay off the \$1200 debt. Even though she is justifiably proud of this feat, Keckley focuses on her later achievements: already a notable dressmaker, or *modiste* as she later styled herself, she was able to climb to the pinnacle of her profession within a very few years after her manumission. It is her connection with people of prominence -- particularly with Abraham and Mary Lincoln -- which makes up the bulk of the narrative. Indeed, in his introduction to a modern edition of Keckley's narrative, James Olney writes that "[after] the first three chapters, the book could best be described as 'memoirs' -- i.e., the sort of narrative that is

grown out of personal experience but that does not focus on the personal element and describes instead external events and figures who occupy some important place in the affairs of the world" (xxxiii). More important to Keckley than the perils of slavery is her access to the White House as a *modiste*, nurse and confidant, roles indicative of her social and economic success. As Frances Smith Foster notes, the very title page of Keckley's narrative stresses "a movement up from slavery":

Keckley's identification as 'formerly a slave, but more recently modiste, and friend [of Mrs. Lincoln]' and her juxtaposition of 'Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House' reject a static definition as 'slave' or even 'former slave'. They suggest progressive movement, emphasizing the social distance traveled (Foster, "Autobiography After Emancipation" 45).

How different, then, is Keckley's triumphant social progress from that of her antebellum counterpart Harriet Jacobs, who, in the words of Valerie Smith, "escapes overwhelming persecutions only by choosing her own space of confinement." Although "each moment of apparent enclosure actually empowers Jacobs to redirect her own and her children's destiny," Jacobs does not, at the end of her narrative, gain access to the homeplace which she desires (Smith, "'Loopholes of Retreat'" 213). As William Andrews notes, the action of Jacobs's employer, who buys the fugitive slave's freedom without her consent, "inevitably circumscribes the freedom that it bestows; to obtain one sort of freedom, Jacobs must submit to another form of powerlessness" (Andrews, "Changing Moral Discourse" 231). Jacobs' personal sense of gratitude, coupled with her economic circumstances, binds her to her employer and leaves her without "a hearthstone of my own" (Jacobs 201). "Jacobs seems to be saying that power, the ability to act on and

realize freedom, stems, in the North as well as the South, not from principle but from property, from that which can be claimed like a home or a hearthstone as 'my own'" (Andrews, "Changing Moral Discourse" 231). Even though Jacobs can legally claim her own body, this claim does not automatically provide access to a personal homeplace, a space equal to that occupied by the married, middle-class white women to whom her narrative is addressed.

In comparison, Behind the Scenes is an unabashed account of its author's economic success. A highly skilled entrepreneur who buys her own freedom, Keckley has only one grown son, who is scarcely mentioned in her narrative. Unlike Jacobs, she maintains her own "apartments," which include both work space and living quarters. While Jacobs championed her right to her own domestic space by establishing another standard of virtue for herself, economics prevented her from translating this into the possession of her own space. Keckley, however, is able to do this--hard work and perseverance take the place of a chastity which was not hers, as a slave, to maintain.

In spite of this, however, Keckley spends very little time describing her domestic space. Access to one's own domestic space did not mean one had attained the full measure of subjectivity, as Frederick Douglass found when he escaped to Massachusetts in 1838. For this reason, perhaps, Keckley's access to the White House is more important to her than the acquisition of her own domestic space. In spite of the limitations of her role, it is her ability to occupy space and form affective ties within the White House, as much as her possession of a private space, which indicates her subjectivity has been

publicly recognized.

The White House was (and is) the most public and private of spaces. The site of the country's governance, it was public space and the centre of a public sphere exclusively dominated by white males. As the President's official residence, however, the White House was, simultaneously, a private, domestic space. Keckley's role as seamstress placed her squarely in the private sphere and the domestic space to which it was confined. At the same time, Keckley was a public figure in her own right: a successful business woman, she was also a recognized leader in the African American community and an organizer of charitable events and institutions. Even though Keckley was not officially attached to the White House's areas of governance, therefore, it may be argued that her position as free woman and increasingly influential and indispensable factotum within this space, coupled by her relative prominence outside of it, is emblematic of African Americans' new role as free participants within the newly reconstituted republic and the spaces which were the sites of its public sphere. Once a symbol of Keckley's slave status and the site of her oppression, her occupation of another's domestic space becomes a mark of her freedom, her increased social status, and a matter of national importance.

Only after the publication of her book, when she was cast off by the surviving Lincolns and reviled by the press, did Keckley truly recognize that such an interpretation was a misstep: an employee and an African American in a world where social boundaries, despite dramatic changes wrought by emancipation, were still rigidly defined, she was an "inferior" who had presumed to "talk out of turn." Keckley had assumed that her

occupation of the domestic space of the White House and her role within it accorded her the public recognition of her subjectivity which would allow her to comment on that space within the public sphere. It did not. The harshness which characterized her narrative's critical reception was apparently prompted by a desire to put Keckley "in her place," a desire which presaged the repressive inequality which was to characterize postbellum race relations.

If Keckley's position as a business woman of influence seemed to embody the place of African Americans in postbellum America, her attitude towards slavery was decidedly postbellum as well. For Douglass and Jacobs slavery was a plague upon the land, an unnatural institution whose supporters were perverse monsters. While Keckley, a former slave herself, could hardly be expected to support slavery, her introduction is entirely devoid of the fiery abolitionist rhetoric of the antebellum narratives. The language of Keckley's preface is conciliatory rather than indignant: the war between the states was over and, in the interests of national unity, she was willing to salve old wounds. As Frances Smith Foster suggests, Keckley's view of slavery as an historical event, rather than a monstrosity against which immediate action had to be taken, is consistent with postbellum attitudes: "After the grim reality of the American Civil War, the emancipation of the slaves and Reconstruction, the primary concerns of slave narratives had only historical value. The slavery issue, in the opinion of the reading public, had been settled, and the wounds were too fresh for objective contemplation" (*Witnessing* 150). Indeed, Keckley refuses to denounce the South for its slaveowning past:

I have kind, true-hearted friends in the South as well as in the North, and I would not wound those Southern friends by sweeping condemnation, simply because I was once a slave. They were not so much responsible for the curse under which I was born, as the God of nature and the fathers who framed the Constitution of the United States (xii).

Had it been made before the Civil War such a statement would not have found favour in the eyes of Frederick Douglass. To see the antebellum Constitution as a proslavery document was rank Garrisonianism; to attribute slavery's existence to "the God of nature" was proslavery blasphemy, since slavery was clearly an ungodly perversion of natural laws.¹ For Douglass, slave space was alternately a barren wasteland, a prison, or, in its fertility, a corrupt, poisonous and defiling paradise. While Jacobs' stand on the Constitution is not clear, she too saw slavery as unnatural and slave space as a site of immoral perversity: "I was twenty-one years in that cage of obscene birds," she wrote (52).² The war, however, had made constitutional squabbles a moot point, while the reasoning behind Keckley's latter assertion places African Americans squarely in the public

¹ Although Behind the Scenes would most certainly have attracted Douglass' notice, I can find no review of the book written by him. This could be because Douglass did not hold an editorial position at the time: having ceased publication of Frederick Douglass' Monthly in 1863 in order to take up an army commission which did not materialize, Douglass was absent from the editor's chair in 1868, the year Behind the Scenes was published. He did not resume his newspaper career until 1870, when he bought a share of the Washington newspaper he renamed the New National Era.

² Although Jacobs's friendly reference to "Frederick[']s" visit to her abolitionist reading room at Rochester (quoted in my second chapter) would suggest association with him and agreement with his Constitutional views, the reference was made in a letter written in May of 1849. Douglass did not formally announce his change of opinion regarding the Constitution until 1851.

sphere precisely during the period when their enslaved condition denied them access to it.

In Keckley's view slavery had been part of the whole nation's moral growth. While the Revolution had established America's independence, "an evil was perpetuated [S]lavery was more firmly established; and since the evil had been planted it must pass through certain stages before it could be eradicated" (Keckley xiii). The struggle over slavery had brought to light "a solemn truth" -- that slavery was wrong. The slave was a "feeble instrument in [God's] hands" whose suffering was instrumental in solving "the great problem of human destiny." Still, as Keckley freely admits, "I was robbed of my dearest right, [and] I would not have been human had I not rebelled against the robbery" (xii).

The newly reconstituted republic is now a truly free space in which the once "feeble instrument" is now a free person who is able to occupy public spaces and take action in the public sphere. This, in turn, means that Mrs. Keckley's own decision to discuss what happens in the Lincoln household -- and specifically, her involvement in the "Old Clothes Scandal," in which the widowed and indebted Mrs. Lincoln unsuccessfully attempts to sell off part of her extravagant wardrobe after the president's assassination -- is not inappropriate. In spite of the apparent modesty which causes her to note that the president's wife belongs to a social class above her own, neither Keckley's race nor her gender preclude her from addressing the public. Although she is aware that writing about the first lady's affairs invites criticism, Keckley justifies her decision to do so by noting that Mary Todd Lincoln "by her own acts, forced herself into notoriety. She stepped beyond

the formal lines which hedge about a private life, and invited public criticism" (xiii). In any case, if "the ladies who moved in the Washington circle in which [Mary Todd Lincoln] moved, freely canvassed her character among themselves" why should her *modiste*, an influential woman in her own right, not be permitted to rise to her defense? (xv) Indeed, since Keckley herself has "been associated with [Mary Todd Lincoln] in so many things that have provoked hostile criticism" she had the right to defend herself and her employer by "explaining the motives that actuated us" (xiv).

Although her assertion that she has a right to elucidate both her own actions and the actions of the former first lady apparently places her on an equal footing with Mary Todd Lincoln, Keckley's narrative is not without contradictions. Keckley herself repeatedly acknowledges the social superiority of the First Lady, while Mary Lincoln's letters, with their "scrambled-up expressions of neediness and paternalism" reveal that Keckley and Lincoln's relationship "is one based on interdependence, underwritten by real similarities but strained by heirarchical social and class relations, racial segregation, radically different experiences, and ultimately conflicting goals" (Fleischner 125). While the Lincolns' domestic space is, unlike that of Keckley's master, a "free space" which does not impose the role of chattel/sexual rival upon Keckley, she is still, despite her influence, a subordinate within its boundaries. If she is not a slave, neither is she an equal: even the affective ties she forms with Mary Todd Lincoln are strongly influenced by the antebellum past. While Mary Lincoln's niece Katherine Helm was patronizing, she was also perceptive when she noted that Elizabeth Keckley served as a substitute for the slave

"Mammy" who cared for Mary during her motherless girlhood in Lexington, Kentucky (Helm 266). Lacking the affective ties of homeplace and emotionally drawn to the role, Keckley learns to her cost that, while the stereotypical "Mammy" is a woman of influence in the white household, she is neither an equal nor a public figure, and can be duly chastised for trying to be so.

That the slave space which early on defines her as a chattel is, like the free space which is the primary evidence of her increase in social status, a domestic space, is something of a paradox. How far has she come, after all? Keckley herself, however, seems does not doubt the measure of her progress. Named Elizabeth Hobbs, she was born at Dinwiddie Court-House, Virginia. Her master, Col. Burwell, "was somewhat unsettled in his business affairs, and while I was yet an infant he made several removals" (19). At four years of age -- pinpointed by Keckley as the dawn of memory -- young "Lizzie" was already charged with the care of her master's infant daughter, "my earliest and fondest pet" (19). Keckley remembers that the child was also named Elizabeth,

and it was pleasant to me to be assigned a duty in connection with it, for the discharge of that duty transferred me from the rude cabin to the household of my master. My simple attire was a short dress and a little apron. My old mistress encouraged me in rocking the cradle, by telling me that if I would watch over the baby well, keep the flies out of its face, and not let it cry, I should be its little maid (20).

The little nurse performs her task with such zeal that she pitches the baby out onto the floor. She is in the process of trying to lift her charge back into the cradle with the fire shovel when she is intercepted by the mistress and severely whipped. "This was the first

time I was punished in this cruel way, but not the last" (21).

Keckley's expressed delight in leaving "the rude cabin" is comparable to Douglass' happily anticipated departure for Baltimore. Because she omits any mention of the conditions which prevail there, however, the reader does not know if the cabin is a site of nurturance or privation. Douglass had left a slave space in which children were treated as "so many pigs." Keckley, however, tells the reader nothing. Jennifer Fleischner presumes that Keckley was removed from a homeplace and suggests that "the slave girl's treatment of her identically named charge" reveals resentment rather than ambition:

The 'accident' becomes an angry outburst against her owners, an expression of hatred and rivalry directed at her white double, and a reenactment of her own removal from the family's cabin, experienced by the child as a rejection, like being pitched out from her cradle into the danger zone of slavery (Fleischner 110-111).

A more careful reading, however, suggests that Keckley's expressed joy at entering the "Big House" may actually have been prompted by a desire to reunite with her mother, who was also a house slave. The homeplace which Fleischner suggests was disrupted by the child's removal may never truly have existed and the child's desire to enter the master's domestic space could have been prompted by a desire to finally share a domestic space with her mother.

This is not, however, what Keckley intends to stress. What is important for her is her recollection, true or false, of her childish ambition. Like Douglass and Jacobs, Keckley reminds us of the cruelty and oppression of slave space. At the same time, however, she presents a picture of herself -- devoted, zealous, working for a reward --

which is in accordance with her adult self. Like a later autobiographer, educator Booker T. Washington, Keckley presents slavery as a rough "school" which has prepared her for the responsibilities of freedom (Washington, Up from Slavery 23). "I had been raised in a hardy school--had been taught to rely upon myself, and to prepare myself to render assistance to others," she writes (Keckley 19). It is this preparedness, which, as much as her humanity, gives her the right to enter into the public spaces and participate in the public sphere of the nation.

While Keckley anticipates the latter part of her narrative in making this claim for herself and, ostensibly, for other African Americans, she elides neither the negative affects of slave space nor the loss of homeplace. Although Jennifer Fleischner speculates that the disruption of the family homeplace occurred when Keckley began her early duties, Keckley herself dates the destruction of the homeplace from the sudden presence, and equally sudden removal of her father. Named George Pleasant, Keckley's father belongs to the owner of another plantation, "and when Mr. Burwell moved from Dinwiddie he was separated from us, and only allowed to visit my mother twice a year."

At last Mr. Burwell determined to reward my mother, by making an arrangement with the owner of my father, by which the separation of my parents could be brought to an end. It was a bright day indeed, for my mother when it was announced that my father was coming to live with us. The old weary look faded from her face and she worked as if her heart was in every task (22).

Keckley's father is overjoyed. Just as her parents, united in their own homeplace, begin to speak "joyfully of the future," however, Col. Burwell enters. He is, we are told, "a kind

master in some things," although one field hand, who has lost a pair of plowlines, later hangs himself rather than face the punishment Col. Burwell metes out. This time, however, Col. Burwell "gently" informs the family that Keckley's father "must join his master at Dinwiddie, and go with him to the West, where he had determined to make his future home. The announcement fell upon the little circle like a thunderbolt" (23). The homeplace is destroyed at the very moment of its construction.

Remarkably, however, the longing threnody for the lost homeplace which characterizes both My Bondage and My Freedom and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is absent. Much of this difference is attributable to the fact that Keckley, unlike Jacobs and Douglass, writes at a time when institutionalized threats to the African American homeplace are part of a not-too-distant past whose greatest inequities have been prohibited, if not entirely rectified. And yet, if she enshews the fiery rhetoric which characterizes the narratives of Douglass and Jacobs, Keckley, who reproduces one of her father's letters verbatim, does not minimize the effect the separation has upon her family. "My dear biloved wife," George Pleasant writes,

I hope with gods helpe that I may be abble to rejoyes with you on the earth and In heaven lets meet when will I am deterrnid to never stope praying, not in this earth and I hope to praise god In glory there weel meet to part no more forever I want Elizabeth to be a good girl and not to thinke that becasue I am bound so fare that gods not abble to open the way (26-27).

Separated from each other by the whim of George Pleasant's master, they could only hope to meet "In glory there weel meet to part no more forever" (27). George Pleasant did

have to wait for "glory": he never again saw his family during his lifetime.

When Keckley's mother mourns her husband's absence, her impatient mistress tells her to stop "putting on airs . . . there are plenty more men about here, and if you want a husband so badly, stop your crying and go find another" (25). This is not the only time mourning is prohibited: when the cook's little son is sold -- by the pound, in exchange for some hogs his increasingly impecunious master is unable to pay cash for -- she too, is chastised for mourning. "One day she was whipped for grieving for her lost boy. Col. Burwell never liked to see one of his slaves wear a sorrowful face, and those who offended in this particular way were always punished" (29). Although the slaveowner could, in Minrose Gwin's words, have "fond feelings for the . . . [slave] who protects and nurtures" the white family, this feeling does not necessarily include a "real sense of . . . [the slave's] own identity as a person with other affections" outside of the household, whose borders, as I have noted elsewhere, are defined by those who owned and profited from the slaves, rather than the slaves' personal affections or bloodlines (Gwin, Black and White Women 107). Although the slave may have familial ties to the homeplace, both the homeplace and those ties exist only upon the master's sufferance. The slave's tie to the master invariably supercedes ties of blood or friendship between slaves.

The Burwells prohibit mourning because, by drawing the slave's emotional focus away from the white family, it disrupts what Annalucia Accardo and Alessandro Portelli have called "the illusion of consent" -- the belief that "blacks, intrinsically inferior, take their servile condition for granted," which "is filtered first through the belief that the

masters' kindness is automatically reciprocated by the slaves' affection and gratitude" (80). Although Col. Burwell, in what he believes to be an act of kindness, initially allows Keckley's mother to live with her chosen husband, the Burwells cannot allow newly bereft slaves to seem unhappy with their lot. Mourning is a form of resistance against that lot and to allow it to pass unchastised makes the slaveowner vulnerable, if not to actual rebellion, then to "the sense of being constantly surrounded by enemies . . . [a feeling] too terrible to be countenanced" (Accardo and Portelli 79).

The prohibition against mourning had a significant effect upon Keckley herself. Although she dramatized her mother's grief, Jennifer Fleishman notes that Keckley says little of the effect her father's absence had upon her. The loss of her only son, who died in combat while she was working in the Lincoln White House, is replaced by a lengthy description of Mary Lincoln's intense reaction to the death of Willie, the Lincoln's eleven-year-old son. Fleishman suggests that even the memory of the cook's son is a "screen memory," "a substitute for more intensely powerful, personal memories. . . .Keckley's comment that she remembers this auction scene vividly suggests its symbolic relation to the memories of absolute loss that she does not dramatise--when she is separated from her mother or her son, or learns of their deaths" (11-112). At the same time, the prohibition of mourning, like the deprivation of homeplace, sets a precedent: in spite of the ambivalence that such acts engender, Keckley unavoidably learns to place her "charges" at the centre of her emotions.

At the age of fourteen Keckley is separated from her mother and sent to live in the

household of the master's eldest son, a Presbyterian minister. Rev. Burwell's "salary was small, and he was burdened with a helpless wife I was their only servant and a gracious loan at that. They were not able to buy me, so my old master sought to render them assistance by allowing them the benefit of my services" (Keckley 31-32). Such arrangements were not uncommon: in her study of plantation women in South Carolina, Marli Weiner writes that useful slaves were frequently borrowed and, "[m]ore often than not, other and more established households loaned slaves to younger, still forming ones" (17). Both Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass, for example, were "loaned" to their masters' family members. Keckley, who has already learned that grief is not permissible, says nothing about her separation from her mother.

Characteristically, however, Keckley reminds the reader of her economic value. "From the very first I did the work of three servants, and yet I was scolded and regarded with distrust," she reports (32). Her workload and Rev. Burwell's small salary -- a fact which suggests that she may have endured some privation -- present the reader with an estimation of her worth. This is important because, like Harriet Jacobs, she is soon to encounter sexual abuse which, by the conventional moral standards of the time, will result in her "devaluation."

At fourteen, "Lizzie" is only one year younger than Harriet Jacobs was when she attracted the attention of Dr. Flint. Whether or not Keckley attracts Rev. Burwell's attention is not directly stated in her narrative, although it is generally presumed that she does, for tension between herself and Mrs. Burwell arises almost immediately. Keckley,

however, attributes the difficulties between herself and her mistress to class differences. Much like Frederick Douglass' mistress Sophia Auld, Mrs. Burwell came from "humble" -- i.e. non-slaveowning -- "walks of life" and Keckley reports that, for this reason, the mistress "was morbidly sensitive, and imagined that I regarded her with contemptuous feelings because she was of poor parentage" (Keckley 31). The charge may have had some merit: Douglass reports that slaves "seemed to think that the greatness of their masters was transferable to themselves. It was considered as being bad enough to be a slave; but to be a poor man's slave was deemed a disgrace indeed!" (Narrative 266-267).

This resentment, however, does not seem to be enough to account for the virulent hatred Mrs Burwell displays. Although Keckley is mistreated from the moment of her arrival, this treatment intensifies when she reaches eighteen. By this time Rev. Burwell has moved his household to Hillsboro', North Carolina and Keckley has grown "into strong, healthy womanhood." Tellingly, "[d]uring this time my master was unusually kind to me; he was naturally a good-hearted man, but was influenced by his wife." Mrs. Burwell, however, "seemed to be desirous to wreak vengeance on me for something" and the village schoolmaster, Mr. Bingham, "became her ready tool" (32). Interestingly, although Keckley intimates that Mrs. Burwell has given Mr. Bingham the authority to chastise her, we are never told why this is so. The connection between the Burwells and Mr. Bingham, which would indicate why Mr. Burwell would be given such authority, is never explained.

Bingham summons "Lizzie" to his study, and, telling her that he is going to "flog" her, bids her take down her dress. "Recollect I was eighteen years of age, was a woman

fully developed and yet this man coolly bade me take down my dress," she writes.

Although her narrative is more reticent than those of Frederick Douglass, who frankly ascribes sexual motives to Captain Anthony when he strips and beats a female slave, Keckley's "recollect" effectively suggests sexual violation. Bingham's demand that Keckley remove her dress has obvious sexual undertones. Although Keckley does not identify Bingham as a rapist, it is clear that his order is a calculated form of sexual humiliation.

The beating takes place, not in the Burwell's kitchen, but in Mr. Bingham's study, well away from the domestic space of Keckley's master. The flogging of Douglass' Aunt Esther, like much of the abuse Harriet Jacobs witnesses in the Flint household, takes place in the kitchen, the very heart of the master's domestic space. For Douglass and Jacobs the location of such cruelty in the heart of the home violates the site of comfort and nurturance. It is doubtful, however, that Keckley's beating is relocated out of any sense of violation. I suggest that Bingham himself chooses the site of chastisement out of a desire to administer it in the space in which he has the most authority. The study is unquestionably his domain and, as the space which is the most emblematic of his formal education (something denied slaves), it physically links *him* to the intimidating status associated with such knowledge.

Keckley, however, refuses to be intimidated. She challenges Bingham's authority by refusing to undress, telling him, "you shall not whip me unless you prove the stronger. Nobody has a right to whip me but my own master, and nobody shall do so if I can

prevent it" (33). Keckley uses this appeal to the slave's ultimate authority, the will of the master, to assert her own autonomy. However this appeal, like Douglass' appeal to Thomas Auld, proves unsuccessful and she is beaten. Her spirit unbroken, Keckley boldly demands to know why she has been punished. Her master is incensed by her temerity and promptly strikes her with a chair. Mr. Bingham continues his efforts to conquer "what he called my 'stubborn pride,'" in spite of Keckley's declaration "that I was ready to die . . . that he could not conquer me" (36). The second time she returns home "sore and bleeding, but with pride as strong and defiant as ever." After trying yet again to subdue her, Bingham bursts into tears and "asked my forgiveness He was never known to strike one of his servants from that day forward" (37).

When Bingham refuses to beat her any more, Rev. Burwell, "who preached the love of Heaven, who glorified the precepts and examples of Christ," is "urged by his wife to punish me himself". He beats the resistant slave with an oaken broom handle until "his wife fell upon her knees and begged him to desist. My distress even touched her cold, jealous heart" (37-38). Minrose Gwin writes that it is more probable that it is the prospect of losing a valuable piece of property which causes Mrs. Burwell to intercede (Black and White Women 66). Nonetheless, Burwell tries once again "to subdue my proud, rebellious spirit." For all her bruises, Keckley is victorious: "he told me, with an air of penitence, that he should never strike me another blow; and faithfully he kept his word" (Keckley 38). Although they may be testimony to the power of her resistance, Keckley does not account for these strange conversions. Public opinion, however, may have

something to do with Bingham and Burwell's defeat: with some satisfaction Keckley writes that these "revolting scenes" are "the talk of the town," where her abusers are "not viewed in a light to reflect much credit upon them" (38).

In spite of her repeated demands, Keckley is never told why she is being beaten. Although her mistress's sexual jealousy was probably a factor, it is also true that, as George P. Rawick writes, "whipping was not only a method of punishment. It was a conscious device to impress upon the slaves that they were slaves; it was a crucial form of social control, particularly if we remember that it was very difficult for slaves to run away successfully" (Rawick 59). Often other, equally violent means were used to break the slave's spirit: Keckley writes that "savage efforts to subdue my pride were not the only things that brought me suffering and deep mortification during my residence at Hillsboro":

I was regarded as fair-looking for one of my race, and for four years a white man-- I spare the world his name -- had base designs upon me. I do not care to dwell upon this subject, for it is one that is fraught with pain. Suffice it to say, that he persecuted me for four years, and I -- I -- became a mother (39).

Citing the prevalence of sexual abuse in nineteenth century slave narratives, Angela Davis writes that the slaveowners frequently "encouraged the terroristic use of rape in order to put Black women in their place. If Black women had achieved a sense of their own strength and a strong urge to resist, then violent sexual assaults -- so the slaveowners might have reasoned -- would remind the women of their essential and inalterable femaleness" (24). I would suggest, however, that rape, like whipping, is a way of

reinforcing Keckley's enslavement, rather than her femaleness. Keckley's mistress is also a female, but *her* weakness and dependence is not -- at least in theory -- routinely enforced by such brutality. Had Mrs. Burwell been assaulted, her husband would have been justified in defending her honour -- an action male slaves did not dare to take. Keckley is abused because she is a slave who dares to exercise her own will, and violence must be used to irradicate any such notion of autonomy.

Although the narrative makes it clear that Keckley is the victim of sexual assault, she deals with her exploitation with a remarkable reticence. In a letter addressed to her mother (reproduced in the narrative) she does not address the situation directly, writing only, "I must now close, although I could fill ten pages with my griefs and misfortunes I . . . would write more now, but Miss Anna says it is time I was finished" (42). The image of "Miss Anna" looking over Keckley's shoulder suggests censorship, and indeed, the consequences of a more explicit letter would be great. Naming the author of her misfortune could only result in being sold away from the mother Keckley hopes to rejoin. The young slave, therefore, can only hint at her desperation: "Tell Miss Elizabeth that I wish she would make haste and get married, for mistress says that I belong to her when she gets married" (42). Her white namesake's claim (presumably as a dowry) to her person is the only way Keckley can escape the domestic space to which she is confined.

Before reproducing her own letter from Hillsboro', Keckley abruptly states that Rev. Burwell "is now [March 1868] living at Charlotte, North Carolina" (33). Minrose Gwin writes that , "[from] her specific mention of Burwell, we may infer that he was the

father of her child" (Black and White Women 67). Although this identification seems probable, other evidence suggests that, like Keckley's initial beatings, the sexual assault itself was "farmed out": John Washington, who spoke to many of Keckley's surviving friends for his book They Knew Lincoln (1942), writes that "[when] about eighteen years of age, Elizabeth Keckley was given by her owner to a friend, Alexander Kirkland, and after four years she bore him a child named George" (206). The narrative's detailed descriptions of the beatings Keckley receives may serve as substitutes for a deeper, darker memory of repeated sexual abuse.

The similarity between Keckley's situation and that of Harriet Jacobs is marked. As William Andrews notes, however, Jacobs' frank revelation of her own loss of sexual "purity" creates something of a problem. Even as she criticizes her exploitation by the slave system in which she lived, Jacobs accepts responsibility for her decision to transgress what Andrews calls "the fundamental norm of antebellum true womanhood --chastity before marriage" ("Changing Moral Discourse" 229). Jacobs' effort to "reconcile an absolute moral standard for womanly virtue prescribed by white culture with the actual circumstances of a slave woman's complex lived experience" results in an ambivalence which, as I have argued, is only resolved when she develops a new and more inclusive standard of womanhood (230).

Keckley's narrative is less problematic because she, in William Andrews words, "refuses to accept the blame for her transgression of middle-class sexual morality" (232). This may be because, unlike Jacobs, who decides to become a white man's mistress in

order to enact some form of revenge against the master who pursues her, Keckley experiences a morally unambiguous coercion. In place of Jacobs' lengthy and ambivalent *mea culpa*, therefore, Keckley writes a terse disclaimer: "If my poor boy ever suffered any humiliating pangs on account of birth, he could not blame his mother, for God knows that she did not wish to give him life; he must blame the edicts of that society which deemed it no crime to undermine the virtue of girls in my then position" (Keckley 39). As William Andrews writes, the phrase "the virtue of girls in my then position" emphasizes "the difference between [Keckley's] past and current position in society". Keckley's lack of sexual purity "is basically irrelevant to the image Keckley intends to create for herself in the postbellum social order" ("Changing Moral Discourse" 232). Recognizing the dangers of what Andrews has called Jacobs' "absolute moral standard," Keckley proves her worth by emphasizing her economic value.

If Keckley's discussion of her sufferings is remarkable for its reticence, her account of the ways in which her labour sustains her master's domestic space is not. By emphasizing her economic worth, Keckley makes it clear that her right to a domestic space of her own, or to participation in the public sphere, is unquestioned, since it is based on her right to the fruits of her labour. Keckley's working life begins with the dawn of her memory. By the time she is eight, Col. Burwell's household includes the master, the mistress, ten of their children, and as many as seventy slaves, most of whom are sold when the Burwells suffer financial reverses. For those household slaves that remain, life within the master's domestic space involves a continuous round of work and possibly, if

Keckley's earliest experience is any indication, regular chastisement.

My mother was kind and forbearing, Mrs. Burwell a hard task-master; and as mother had so much work to do in making clothes, etc. for the family, besides the slaves, I determined to render her all the assistance in my power, and in rendering her such assistance my young energies were taxed to the utmost (21).

Although she "knit socks and attended various kinds of work, I was repeatedly told, when even fourteen years old, that I would never be worth my salt" (21). By devaluing Keckley's worth, Col. Burwell seeks to emphasize her dependence, for it was commonly held that slaves were like children, who would not be able to take care of themselves.

While Burwell's devaluation actually masks his own dependence, Keckley's own resentment strips bare both his parasitism and her own economic exploitation. It is Keckley, rather than her owner, who is increasingly instrumental in maintaining the master's domestic space. Sent to Rev. Burwell's at fourteen, she "from the very first . . . did the work of three servants" (32). When Keckley returns to Virginia she is sent, not to her white namesake, as her first mistress's early promise suggests, but to Col. Burwell's married daughter, Anne Garland. A man with either ill-luck, poor business sense, or both, Mr. Garland moves to Missouri to improve his fortune. However, "[when] his family, myself included, joined him in his new home on the banks of the Mississippi, we found him so poor that he was unable to pay the dues on a letter advertised as in the post-office for him" (44). When the impecunious Garlands propose to hire Keckley's aging mother out to strangers, Keckley takes on extra work in her mother's stead. The support of the whole Garland household devolves upon her alone: "With my needle I kept bread in the mouths

of seventeen persons for two years and five months. While I was working so hard that others might live in comparative comfort . . . the thought often occurred to me whether I was really worth my salt or not; and then perhaps the lips curled with a bitter sneer" (45-46). The slaveowner's rhetoric of dependence has been turned inside out: it is the Garlands, rather than Keckley, who are dependent.

As in the case of Harriet Jacobs, this relation of domination and economic exploitation is overlaid by a pseudo-familial relationship which, although it is superseded by the tie of ownership, is nonetheless real. Keckley's mother, for example, is the Garland's Mammy. She, we are told,

had been raised in the family, had watched the growth of each child from infancy to maturity, they had been the objects of her kindest care, and she was wound round about them as the vine winds itself about the rugged oak. They had been the central figures in her dream life -- a dream beautiful to her, since she had basked in the sunshine of no other (44).

While the Garlands depend upon the labour power of Keckley's mother, her inclusion within the domestic sphere has bred in her its own brand of emotional dependence. Prevented from forming independent affective ties within a homeplace of her own -- her husband George, it will be remembered, had been taken elsewhere by his master -- Keckley's mother has directed her emotional resources towards the family she has served in a domestic space which is not her own. As Deborah Gray White writes, "[the] children and household upon which [Mammy] lavished her attentions were, of course, not her own. There was room for black women in the Victorian tradition only to the extent that Mammy's energies were expended on whites" (60). Although this tie is probably not

without its ambivalence (although Keckley does not inform us of this), it is a powerful one.

By proposing to force Keckley's mother out of their domestic space, the Garlands violate the very emotional dependance which they have fostered for their own benefit. In Keckley's words, they have "proposed to destroy each tendril of affection, to cloud the sunshine of her existence when the day was drawing to a close" (45). The pseudo-familial tie between Keckley's mother and the Garland family does not supercede the fundamental tie of ownership and economic exploitation. Maintained as a member of the family, Keckley's mother is, nonetheless, in danger of being expelled in the interests of maintaining the domestic space which she herself has been denied. In spite of the stereotype, which designated Mammy as the woman in charge of the household, this example illustrates that she was not economically independent of the master, who could sell her body, her labour, or her children at will.

Although the tie of ownership produces an unspoken, but barely concealed ambivalence in Keckley's case, she, unlike Frederick Douglass, does not downplay the emotional bond between herself and her owners. In her letter from Hillsboro' she bids her mother to "[give] my love to all the family, both white and black" (41). Although the circumstances under which the letter is written makes its sentiments suspect, Keckley's later behavior (she devotes one chapter of the latter part of the narrative to a kindly description of a postbellum visit) indicates that her emotional attachment is real. At the same time, she never forgets that any affective tie between master and slave is superceded

by the tie of ownership and enforced dependence. While her mother, bereft of homeplace and devoid of almost all independent emotional ties, is threatened by her potential exclusion from the Garlands' domestic space, Keckley, determined not to be deprived as her mother has been, makes a bid for her own independence. Buying herself is the only way in which she can legally sever the tie of ownership and leave the Garland's domestic space in order to create a homeplace which will not be disrupted by the will of the master. Although Keckley is as reticent as always, it is clear that the creation of an independent homeplace has become important if she is to avoid the loss her mother experienced:

"About this time Mr. Keckley, whom I had met in Virginia, and learned to regard with more than friendship, came to St. Louis." Wary of her parents' experience, Keckley avoids attempting to construct a homeplace of her own until she is able to ensure that both it, and the affective ties expressed within it, may not be disrupted by the whim of the master.

"[Mr. Keckley] sought my hand in marriage, and for a long time I refused to consider his proposal; for I could not bear the thought of bringing children into slavery -- of adding one single recruit to the millions bound to hopeless servitude, fettered and shackled with chains stronger and heavier than manacles of iron" (46).

Although Keckley offers to buy herself, her master initially refuses to consider her proposal and, instead, offers her a quarter, saying that it "will pay the passage of yourself and boy on the ferry-boat, and when you are on the other side of the river you will be free. It is the cheapest way that I know of to accomplish what you desire" (48). Still attempting to prove that she is "worth her salt," Keckley rejects the offer. Her willingness

to pay for herself would have horrified Frederick Douglass, who, in the most radical portions of My Bondage and My Freedom, insisted upon the slave's right to steal the slaveowner's belongings -- including the slave's own person -- in order to be compensated for the fruits of his or her labour (190-191). In Keckley's narrative, however, it is the African American's ability to take her place in the capitalist market, rather than her humanity, which is in question. Eventually, the sum of \$1200 dollars is agreed upon and Keckley, before going North to earn enough money to buy her freedom, tries to find six businessmen in St. Louis who will agree, in writing, to pay her owner the agreed upon sum should she fail to return. Although the last of her signatories offers his name, he expresses his doubts: "When you reach New York the abolitionists will tell you what savages we are, and they will prevail on you to stay there, and we shall never see you again" (52).

"I was beginning to feel sick at heart," Keckley writes, "for I could not accept the signature of this man when he had no faith in my pledges" (52). Her description of the grief brought on by the white man's doubt is far more explicit than any of her reactions to other, personal losses. "The heart grew heavy," she writes. "Every ray of sunshine was eclipsed" (53). As William Andrews notes,

No one, least of all Keckley herself, is concerned about this slave woman's sexual respectability; at issue is something much more important--her financial reputation. Whether or not having a spotless business reputation in the antebellum South mattered all that much to Keckley, we may be sure that she wanted her *postbellum* audience to know of her unswerving fealty to the ethics of the market place. A self-supporting businesswoman like Keckley could hardly afford to do otherwise ("Changing Moral Discourse"

233)

Finally, the money is raised by a group of Keckley's customers, including, appropriately enough, a woman named Mrs. Le Bourgois. Proud of her enterprising spirit and the hard won trust it engendered, Keckley reprints the complex paperwork surrounding her emancipation. The agreement is made when Keckley is thirty-seven; her son George is sixteen. It takes her five years to repay her sponsors.

Because Keckley has experienced the early disruption of her parents homeplace she makes sure that freedom is within her grasp before she consents to marry. In spite of this, however, the domestic rhetoric characteristic of Harriet Jacobs' narrative is remarkably absent. Jacobs was prevented from marrying a free carpenter and establishing a homeplace of her own by her master's sexual jealousy. In her narrative, therefore, Jacobs longingly idealizes the free, secure, domestic space, the site of a homeplace unaffected by slavery. It is the slaveowner's lack of sexual constancy which causes "[jealously] and hatred [to] enter the flowery home," which is "ravaged of its loveliness" (Jacobs 36). Jacobs' language suggests that, when untrammelled by slavery, the domestic space is Edenic. Although this picture of the slaveholder's domestic space as a ravaged Eden may be part of the abolitionist rhetoric, nowhere does Jacobs indicate that the prevailing patriarchal ideology, which declared that women were subject to their husbands, was problematic. Not all abolitionists would have agreed: although Jacobs may have sought to strengthen her argument by appealing to the sanctity of the home, white freeborn women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony could not help but make

parallels between slavery and their own condition.

The absence of an idealistic portrayal of the untrammelled possession of a domestic space in Keckley's narrative, however, is more likely the result of the outcome of her marriage than any overt espousal of feminist principles. Although she, unlike Jacobs, is permitted to marry a man of her own choosing, the marriage is a failure. In order to ensure the stability of the homeplace, Keckley refrains from marrying until she can purchase her freedom. James Keckley's deception, however, makes the homeplace's existence fundamentally unstable. It is only after they are married that his wife learns that he is "a slave instead of a free man, as he represented himself to be." Like his wife's father, he can be taken out of the state at the will of his master. James' legal status aside, it is clear that, whether slave or free, the Keckley homeplace is not the flowery, Edenic bower of Harriet Jacobs' imaginings. "Mr. Keckley -- let me speak kindly of his faults -- proved dissipated, and a burden instead of a helpmate With the simple explanation that I lived with him eight years, let charity draw around him the mantle of silence" (50). Ironically, Elizabeth Keckley, as a newly manumitted slave, has more freedom than her white counterparts: since James' enslaved status puts both the legality of the marriage and his claim to his wife's earnings, person, and any prospective children in question, Elizabeth can terminate the relationship without fear of legal repercussions. Her health affected by her five-year effort to repay her "benefactors," Elizabeth Keckley "determined to make a change":

I had a conversation with Mr. Keckley; informed him that since he

persisted in dissipation we must separate; that I was going North, and that I should never live with him again, at least until I had good evidence of his reform. He was rapidly debasing himself, and although I was willing to work for him, I was not willing to share his degradation My husband is now sleeping in his grave and in the silent grave I would bury all unpleasant memories of him (63-64).

Depositing her adult son at Wilberforce University in Ohio, Keckley left, unencumbered, for Missouri in 1860. After an unsuccessful attempt to set up a sewing school in Baltimore (the city was a mecca for free blacks and the only Southern city in which the free black population outnumbered the resident slaves), Keckley heads for Washington D.C. (Phillips 58). Here she "rented apartments in a good locality, and soon had a good run of custom" (Keckley 65).³

Unlike Harriet Jacobs, who focusses upon her efforts to develop and maintain a free domestic space for herself and her children, Elizabeth Keckley focusses almost exclusively upon free work space which, for her, is the domestic spaces of others. When Keckley was a slave she had occupied, and been defined by slave space, an area which, for the domestic slave, overlapped the master's domestic space. This much has remained the same: although she rents rooms to conduct her business, her work space is still, more often than not, the domestic space of her employers. But while her occupation of the domestic spaces of others was once a mark of slave status, her occupation of these same

³ Her location was very good indeed: John Washington reports that Keckley rented rooms in the home of Walker Lewis, "one of the leading caterers of the city [, he] kept a boarding house, which was patronized by the most distinguished leaders of colored people then in Washington" (212). The address itself is an indication that Keckley had joined African America's growing middle class.

spaces now marks her economic success and public recognition of her status as a free businesswoman. Having built a reputation for reliability and talent, Keckley is soon recommended to Varina Davis, the wife of Jefferson Davis, the man who would later become the president of the Confederacy. Keckley writes: "I went to the house to work, but finding that they were such late risers, and as I had to fit many dresses on Mrs. Davis, I told her that I should prefer giving half the day to her, working the other in my own room for some of my other lady patrons. Mrs. D. consented to the proposition, and it was arranged that I should come to her own house every day after 12 M" (66). This arrangement is evidence of Keckley's freedom, since it lacks the compulsion which characterizes the life of a slave. Although, even as a free woman, Keckley is subjected to the racial segregation with which Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs are already too familiar, she is not confined to the Davis' domestic space. That Keckley serves Jefferson Davis' wife in her home, rather than in Keckley's own place of business, is an indication of Mrs. Davis' rank (she is the wife of a Senator) and the extent of her patronage rather than the compulsion born of ownership. Keckley's account makes it clear that she sees Mrs. Davis's decision to employ her as an indication of her status as one of the foremost dressmakers in Washington: "I . . . was employed by [Mrs. Davis] on the recommendation of one of my patrons and her intimate friend, Mrs Captain Hetsill" (66).

Keckley sees her position as a relatively important one, since it puts her in contact with people soon to be at the centre of the most pivotal event in American history since the Revolution. "It was the winter before the breaking out of that fierce and bloody war

between the two sections of the country," she writes.

[As] Mr. Davis occupied a leading position, his house was the resort of politicians and statesmen from the South. Almost every night, as I learned from the servants and other members of the family, secret meetings were held at the house; and some of these meetings were protracted to a very late hour. The prospects of war were freely discussed in my presence by Mr. and Mrs. Davis and their friends (66-67).

Her presence during such discussions and her discrete reportage of them (she avoids particulars in order to prevent stirring up old passions) is an indication of her authority and reliability as a narrator of the national events she later describes. In spite, or rather because of, her position as a small tradeswoman, Keckley is an observer, and therefore, in some minor but still important sense a participant in national events. The Davis home, much like the White House, is simultaneously both a public and a private space and Keckley, by participating in the former, is able to authoritatively observe and comment upon the latter.

At the same time, it may be argued that there is still an element of compulsion present in her position: although she is not owned by Mrs. Davis, Keckley depends upon such lady patrons to survive. The business requires a combination of skills, the most notable of which are honesty, efficiency, and an appearance of appropriate, although still dignified, deference. These are all things at which Keckley excels, so much so that Mrs. Davis, without any apparent awareness of the situation's irony, asks Keckley to come South with her on the eve of the Civil War. "You had better go South with me," she advises Keckley. "I will take good care of you. Besides, when the war breaks out, the

colored people will suffer in the North. The Northern people will look upon them as the cause of the war, and I fear, in their exasperation, will be inclined to treat you harshly" (71). Although the expectation that a former slave would follow her South sounds ludicrous, Mrs. Davis assessed the situation in the North correctly: in 1863, during a three-day draft riot in New York a mob of whites tore through the streets, smashing and burning black homes, businesses and schools and lynching a black coachman, whose body was tossed onto a bonfire amid cheers for "Jeff Davis."

While Keckley performs her role to perfection, she is most emphatically her own woman. If freedom, during the nineteenth century, did not guarantee African Americans voting rights or citizenship (for, as Leon Litwack notes, the State Department often, though not invariably, refused to issue passports to African Americans), it did include the limited and highly contested right to choose the space one was to occupy (Litwack, North of Slavery 54-57). Although she claims to consider Varina Davis' offer carefully, Keckley chooses the "free" space of the North, concluding that "the people [of the North] would fight for the flag they pretended to venerate so highly" (Keckley 72). In spite of Mrs. Davis' appeal to the *modiste's* sense of self-preservation and Keckley's claim that "[Mrs. Davis] reasoning seemed plausible," a woman who has even refused to marry and reproduce, lest she add "one single recruit to the millions bound to hopeless servitude," until her freedom has been assured would scarcely choose otherwise (72, 46). In the interests of postbellum harmony, however, Keckley resists ridiculing the Davises: "The years have brought many changes; and in view of these terrible changes even I, who was

colored people will suffer in the North. The Northern people will look upon them as the cause of the war, and I fear, in their exasperation, will be inclined to treat you harshly" (71). Although the expectation that a former slave would follow her South sounds ludicrous, Mrs. Davis assessed the situation in the North correctly: in 1863, during a three-day draft riot in New York a mob of whites tore through the streets, smashing and burning black homes, businesses and schools and lynching a black coachman, whose body was tossed onto a bonfire amid cheers for "Jeff Davis."

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once a slave . . . who have experienced the heart and soul tortures of a slave's life, can say to Mr. Jefferson Davis, 'Peace! You have suffered! Go in peace.'" (74).

If Varina Davis appealed to Keckley's instinct for self-preservation, she also appealed to Keckley's ambition: when the South won, Varina reasoned, Jefferson Davis would become president and Keckley would work at the White House. Although Keckley's loyalties did not permit her to support a pro-slavery regime, her ambition was hardly in abeyance. She soon turned her attention to the current First Lady, Mary Todd Lincoln, who, in 1860, was preparing for her husband Abraham's inauguration. Knowing that Keckley desired to work for the First Lady, General McClean's wife promised to arrange the coveted introduction if Keckley could complete a dress in one week -- a virtual impossibility given Keckley's work load. Although Mrs. Keckley initially refused the task, the promise had its desired effects. By hiring assistants and working late hours she completed the dress, and was asked to call on General McClean's wife late Sunday afternoon. "As she did not state why I was to call, I determined to wait till Monday morning. Monday morning came, and nine o'clock found me at Mrs. McC's house" (81). The delay is notable if only because Keckley chooses to enter the work space -- the McClean's domestic space -- during business hours, an option she would not have had as a domestic slave. Such a decision is indicative of both Keckley's freedom and her relative social standing: an ordinary housemaid, though nominally free, would not have dared to delay answering such a summons.

The delay, however, almost costs Keckley the desired patronage. True to her

promise, the general's wife has recommended Keckley's services to the first lady, who has damaged the dress she had intended to wear to the inaugural ball. After chiding her -- for Mary Lincoln may already have found a dressmaker -- the general's wife sends Keckley on to the Lincolns' hotel rooms, where Keckley arranges to meet the first lady at the White House the next day. "Tuesday morning, at eight o'clock, I crossed the threshold of the White House for the first time," Keckley writes (83). Perceiving that the first lady's other acquaintances have also sent their dressmakers, her hopes fail, only to be revived during the ensuing interview. Besides the direct recommendation of the general's wife, Keckley strategically drops the name of Varina Davis. When the first lady haggles -- a compulsive spender, she has already begun to exhibit the obsession with money and poverty which will take over her final years -- Keckley promises, in the words of Mary Lincoln, "work cheap," and is asked to complete "a bright rose-colored moire-antique" (85).

Although the "levee" is postponed, alterations, along with the request that she complete a "waist" for a friend of the president's wife, prevent Keckley from completing the dress until the evening of the event. When she enters the White House she finds "the ladies in a terrible state of excitement. Mrs. Lincoln was protesting that she could not go down, for the reason that she had nothing to wear" (87). The overexcited president's wife charges Keckley with deception and, "bitterly disappointed," refuses to dress and go downstairs. Keckley calmly apologizes and, in spite of the first lady's repeated refusals, coaxes her into the dress. "I dressed her hair, and arranged the dress on her. It fitted nicely, and she was pleased," Keckley writes (88). The president tells his wife that she

looks "charming" and, in words of praise which the *modiste* undoubtedly savours, that "Mrs. Keckley has met with great success" (88). And indeed she has: by her own estimation Mrs. Keckley completes some fifteen or sixteen dresses for the president's wife in one season alone. When the Lincoln's leave to make their grand entrance Mrs. Keckley notes, "I was surprised at [Mrs. Lincoln's] grace and composure." Lincoln himself was of humble origins and, newly arrived from Illinois, Mrs. Lincoln was said to be ignorant and vulgar. "Report, I soon saw, was wrong. No queen, accustomed to the usages of royalty all her life, could have comported herself with more calmness and dignity than did the wife of the President. She was confident and self-possessed, and confidence always gives grace" (89). Although she did not say so, Keckley is also undoubtedly surprised that a woman so recently on the verge of hysterics could perform her social duties so successfully.

Despite false reports of her social ineptitude, Mary Todd Lincoln, unlike her husband, was of socially impeccable, although soon to be politically contested, origins. A vivacious and highly strung woman, she was the daughter of Robert Todd, a successful lawyer, businessman, politician and slaveowner from Lexington, Kentucky. Mary's mother died when she was seven and, although Robert Todd's unmarried sister moved in to superintend the household, Mary and her six siblings were primarily cared for by slaves "Mammy Sally" and Judy, a nursemaid. Robert Todd's second wife was emotionally distant and the advent of eight more children -- born within the first thirteen years of the marriage -- did nothing to assuage Mary's loneliness. In his psychological analysis of the

Lincolns, Charles Strozier writes that Mary Lincoln's childhood traumas made her vulnerable to separation and loss. Always wilful and impetuous, she "seemingly cried out for support, love, and nurturing from her father, her missing mother, and anyone else who might help her." Although Strozier writes that her "calls went largely unheeded," the role of Mammy Sally in fulfilling those need should not be underestimated. I would argue that while Mary "attached herself to Lincoln with all the intensity resulting from those unfulfilled childhood longings," she also attached herself to Elizabeth Keckley, replicating the most important relationship of her childhood (Strozier 73).

Keckley seems to have been a calming, nurturing influence on the first lady. It is she, after all, who persuades an overwrought Mary Lincoln to get dressed for the inaugural ball. This role apparently became routine: John Washington writes that

[for] some unaccountable reason Mrs Lincoln would yield to Mrs. Keckley when her husband could not get her to budge. When she was sick from her dreadful headaches, she wanted to see no one, nor have near her anyone but 'Lizabeth' and even when she spent that horrible night in the Petersen house waiting for the end to come to her loving husband, she kept up a constant cry for Mrs. Keckley (224).

This latter piece of information is confirmed by Keckley's own narrative.

I theorize that once Elizabeth Keckley enters the domestic space of the White House she becomes a "mammy" figure for Mary Lincoln -- a confidant, protector and advisor who is nonetheless economically dependent upon an employer who frequently reverts to the wilful, childish role she must have played in the Todd household. Thus the two women, occupying the same domestic space which, was once slave space, replicate

the roles they formerly played in the slave-owning household, even as their relationship itself is characterized by wage, rather than slave, labour. If Keckley's relationship with Mary Lincoln lacks the violent compulsion which was her experience as a slave, it is still characterized by both the economic inequality and the emotional interdependence of the relationship between Keckley's mother and her owners, the Garlands.

Elizabeth Keckley's willingness to accept, however unconsciously, her position as the first lady's pseudo-mammy suggests that, in spite of the fact that she has established a space of her own in the work rooms she so proudly maintains, this space is not a homeplace. With her connection to James Keckley severed and her son George away at Wilberforce University in Ohio (there is no indication of how often, or even if, he can afford to visit), Keckley's space lacks the emotional bonds which would make it a homeplace. As I have noted in previous chapters, the primary characteristic of this homeplace bond, besides its affection, is its recognition of African American subjectivity -- the factor which differentiates it from the affective ties which could develop between slaveowners and their domestic slaves. While Keckley receives this recognition in Washington's African American élite, it is not part of the affective bond of the homeplace. It is perhaps for this reason that she is susceptible to Mary Todd Lincoln's affection, dependence and apparent recognition of her as a subject. She is, as Mrs. Lincoln writes plaintively at one point, the first lady's "best living friend" (Keckley 301). Although it is problematic, beset as it is by social and economic inequities, the friendship draws Keckley into the Lincoln domestic space.

Mary Lincoln's identification of Elizabeth Keckley with the role of "mammy" is so complete that Keckley never becomes a victim of the sexual jealousy which is so characteristic of her relationship to Mrs. Burwell. This may simply be because, now in her mid-forties, she is of a suitable age: the "mammy" of fiction and nostalgia is always older and desexualized, the opposite of the sexually tempting Jezebel, the position which Keckley unwillingly occupied in her youth. Still, photographs show Keckley to be a handsome woman, far more aristocratic and stately than her rather dumpy employer. The absence of any expression of sexual jealousy on the part of Mary Lincoln is even more remarkable since Keckley reports that, on at least one occasion, Mary Lincoln forbids her husband to even speak to women she thinks are flirting with him (124-125).

However, this intimate relationship with Mary Todd Lincoln develops only gradually. First, Keckley must prove her loyalty to the Lincoln household. She does this by becoming a gatekeeper, protecting the Lincoln's domestic space from the incursions of undesirable outsiders. Abraham Lincoln's humble origins excited intense curiosity and "[as] soon as it was known that I was the modiste of Mrs. Lincoln, parties crowded around and affected friendship for me, hoping to induce me to betray the secrets of the domestic circle" (92). At one point an actress comes to Keckley's rooms and, having already bought one of her dresses, offers a bribe of several thousand dollars in return for a recommendation as a chambermaid. An indignant Mrs. Keckley bars the woman from her work rooms, declaring that she would sooner "throw [herself] into the Potomac river" than "betray the trust of a friend" (94). While this anecdote is offered as proof of Mrs.

Keckley's reliability, discretion, and integrity, it is true that her narrative does precisely what she has sworn she would not. Although (as I shall note later), the response of the surviving Lincolns to Keckley's publication confirms that they saw Keckley's book as a betrayal of trust, Keckley herself, in the introduction discussed above, justifies this contradiction with the argument that such intimate facts are revealed in the defense of the White House's inhabitants.

Perhaps the best example of Keckley's sense of inclusion is her description of a speech President Lincoln delivers from the White House shortly before his assassination. Arriving at the White House, Keckley sees Lincoln "looking over his notes and muttering to himself" (175). At the appointed time, the president "advanced to the centre window over the door to make his address" (176). While Lincoln faces the lawn in order to address the public, he remains inside one of the upper rooms and within sight of his private preparations, a position which highlights the public/private nature of the White House. Significantly, Keckley is *inside* with the Lincolns, rather than outside, with the majority of the audience. With Keckley and Mary Todd Lincoln are "a number of distinguished gentlemen, as well as ladies" (177). Keckley interprets her presence as a symbol of the acceptance of African Americans into the public space in which the public sphere is conducted.

At the same time, we know that Keckley is present in a domestic capacity: when she asks if she can attend, Mary Todd Lincoln readily acquiesces, adding, "By the way, come in time to dress me before the speaking commences" (175). With this in mind, the

symbolism suggested by Keckley's presence changes. Does her position as the first family's hireling suggest that African Americans, in spite of emancipation, will still be "hewers of wood and drawers of water"? Keckley forestalls such an interpretation, however: although she notes the class differences between herself and the president's wife on other occasions, she de-emphasizes her inferior social status here, portraying herself as a reliable witness, and thus, in some sense, a participant in public events once barred to the former slave.

While Mrs. Lincoln begins by consulting with "Lizabeth" about the White House's social arrangements and her own appearance, Mrs. Keckley soon begins to fill other roles. When the Lincolns' eleven-year-old son Willie becomes ill, it is she who is called to the White House to nurse him. Although she is not in the room when he dies, it is Keckley who prepares the boy's body for burial. The Lincolns are overcome with grief and the first lady's unconsolable paroxysms are such that the President himself warns her that she will end up in an asylum if she does not make some effort at self-control. The warning proves sadly prophetic.⁴

Along with Keckley's own description of the Lincoln's grief, the narrative includes a lengthy eulogy written by Nathaniel Parker Willis, who, curiously enough, was Harriet

⁴ Mary Todd Lincoln's behavior was to become increasingly erratic after her husband's assassination and the death of their youngest son, "Tad." In 1875 her increasing paranoia and periodic hallucinations, coupled with her compulsive spending -- the latter problem was already in evidence during Lincoln's presidential term -- caused her surviving son Robert to have her committed for a brief period.

Jacobs's employer and the "Mr. Bruce" of Incidents. The death of Keckley's own son, a Union soldier, is almost an afterthought, mentioned only in order to record Keckley's grateful reception of the first lady's "golden words of comfort." Fulsome in describing the Lincolns' grief, Keckley is economical when it comes to her own: she does not even mention the name of the son whose death is "a sad blow to me" (105).

On the surface this omission lends credence to James Olney's contention that Keckley's narrative is more of a memoir than an autobiography, since this major loss is spoken of only in relation to its connection to the Lincolns, who have by this point become the central figures of Keckley's narrative. I agree, however, with Jennifer Fleischner, who suggests that this description of Willie Lincoln's death holds profound psychological importance for Keckley, who, forbidden to mourn her losses in childhood, substitutes the Lincolns' grief for her own. Slavery had also encouraged her to expend her emotional resources on the white slaveowner's family instead of her own, a psychological process she repeats in freedom. This is compounded by the likelihood that Keckley's son never entered her rented rooms in Washington, leaving her domestic space without the emotional bonds which would make it a homeplace. Unable to share a domestic space with her son during his life, she is unable to mourn his death in a space set aside for it: a Union soldier, Keckley's son dies on a battlefield in Missouri and she, unlike the Lincolns, cannot observe the ritualized forms of mourning. The description of Willie Lincoln's death in his parents' domestic space and his funeral in the east room of the White House, therefore, substitutes for this lack in Keckley's life, while her supportive presence

undoubtedly helps to strengthen the emotional ties between herself and Mrs. Lincoln.

And yet, even as Keckley's identification with the Lincolns becomes stronger, she still maintains an independent role outside of the Lincoln household. While, as I have already suggested, Keckley's occupation of a space within the White House symbolizes the position which African Americans will potentially take in the public sphere of a newly reconstituted republic, her position as the founder and president of the Contraband Relief Association is a concrete realization of this potential. In 1862, while the Civil War was yet at its height, African American refugees began to flock to Washington "fresh from the benighted regions of the plantation" (111). The newly freed slaves had hoped to find an Edenic free space; instead, they found that "mute appeals for help too often were answered by cold neglect" (112). Impoverished, and accustomed to the dependence which paternalism had encouraged and enforced, blacks were spoken of as "an idle, dependent race" (112). Keckley, industrious and independent, has an idea: "If the white people can give festivals to raise funds for the relief of suffering soldiers, why should not the well-to-do colored people go to work to do something for the benefit of the suffering blacks? . . . [T]he next Sunday I made a suggestion in the colored church, that a society of colored people be formed to labor for the benefit of the unfortunate freedmen" (113). Although Mrs. Keckley records the contributions of the Lincolns, Wendell Phillips and other white Americans, she chiefly details the efforts of "the well-to-do colored people." Frederick Douglass matches Mrs. Lincoln's contribution of \$200.00 and waives his customary lecture fee for fundraisers, while other prominent African Americans, such as

the pastor and anti-slavery activist Henry Highland Garnet, also contribute to the cause.

While Keckley's documentation of the Association's efforts counteracts the notion of the race's indolent dependence, it also highlights class divisions within the African American community. As Lynn Domina notes, Keckley identifies herself "if only by association with the 'well-to-do colored people' rather than with 'suffering blacks,' [clearly subverting] any notion of undifferentiated unity among former slaves" (140). At one point Keckley, with detached amusement, records the complaints of a former slave, who says that she had been in Washington eight months without receiving one shift from "Missus Lingom" (141). Keckley explains "the pith of the joke" to her Northern readers:

On the Southern plantation, the mistress, according to established custom, every year made a present of certain under-garments to her slaves, which articles were always anxiously looked forward to, and thankfully received. The old woman had been in the habit of receiving annually two shifts from her mistress, and she thought the wife of the President of the United States very mean for overlooking this established custom of the plantation (142).

Jennifer Fleishner writes that, "[a]s an example of the genre of self-debasing post-slavery tales, this vignette seems to fall into a general pattern of Keckley's desire to separate herself from the old plantation ways and dialect" (127).

This desire for separation represents a clear break from the narratives of the antebellum past. In My Bondage and My Freedom Douglass briefly acknowledged an existing class difference between house and field slaves. This, however, as I argued in a previous chapter, is chiefly recorded in order to account for the positive depictions of slavery brought back by Northern visitors. While some of the slaves in Harriet Jacobs's

narrative occasionally use dialect -- usually an indication of lower social status -- Jacobs is more interested in highlighting the class differences between herself and the poor whites who make up the slave patrols. By focussing on the latter, she enlists the sympathy of her middle-class readers. Still, Jacobs is the "Slave Girl" of her narrative's title, a title which suggests that her experiences are common to all slave women. Correspondingly, the subtitle of Douglass's first autobiography describes him as "an American Slave," marking him as a representative of his class. In the interests of the campaign for immediate abolition, the two thus present themselves as representatives of an undifferentiated class of unjustly enslaved Americans. In doing so, they minimize the nascent class differences caused by their access to literacy, a skill denied most slaves but within the reach of urban house servants, such as Douglass and Jacobs themselves.

While a woman who had started life as a slave herself would scarcely have opposed immediate emancipation, Keckley distanced herself and the emerging black middle-class from their needier counterparts in order to make it clear that African Americans could capably lead themselves and others during the Reconstruction period when, for the first time, they would briefly hold positions of political power. In contrast to the old woman's material and metaphorical shiftlessness, therefore, "others went to work with commendable energy, and planned with remarkable forethought" (142). Presumably, these "others" include the well-to-do members of the Contraband Association, who have already successfully imitated white middle-class ideals of industry and independence. Soon, the newly emancipated follow suit, establishing and supporting

modest domestic spaces of their own: "They built themselves cabins, and each family cultivated for itself a small patch of ground. The colored people are fond of domestic life, and with them domestication means happy children, a fat pig, a dozen or more chickens, and a garden" (142). Although Keckley does not mention it, it was the first time the freedmen and women could establish a homeplace without worrying about being separated by the whim of an individual master.

In spite of Keckley's apparent commendation of the more energetic freedmen and women, William Andrews writes that the above remarks also reflect "Keckley's ambivalence toward home as she understood it in African American life Emotionally baggageless in the North" and without Jacobs's intense desire for a "'home of my own,'" Keckley, in Andrews words, "devoted herself entirely to her career" ("Changing Moral Discourse" 235). I disagree with Andrews's interpretation, however. Keckley's assertion that newly freed African Americans "make a home, and are so fond of it that they prefer it, squalid though it be, to the comparative ease and luxury of a shifting, roaming life" is just as likely designed to reassure Keckley's white middle-class readers that the former slaves could and would take care of themselves (Keckley 140). She proudly records that the Freedmen's Village on the outskirts of Washington provides "evidences of prosperity and happiness" (143).

This reassurance that African-Americans would successfully make the transition between bondage and freedom was sorely needed. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, newly freed men and women transversed the country seeking out family members,

economic opportunities, and homes they had been sold away from. Others travelled solely to experience a freedom of movement which had always been denied them. Slave space had become free space and many moved about just to test the reality of this transformation. Many white Americans could not, or would not, understand what motivated this apparent restlessness, and made dire predictions regarding the fate of the race. Historian Leon Litwack writes that "the dispossessed slaveholding class observed the fatal effects of emancipation on the Negro character and the plantation economy." These beliefs, of course, rested "on long-held assumptions about the character and limited capacity of the African race. Released from the care and discipline of the master . . . the freedman by his behavior revealed how necessary that bondage had been" (Litwack, Storm So Long 344). The Union officers who staffed the Freedmen's Bureau were scarcely more sympathetic: many were more interested in turning the freedmen and women into "reliable agricultural labourers" (379). It also should be noted that reports of the ex-slaves' "indolence" are relative: the charge was often applied to those who refused to work for their former masters. Ex-slaves who would no longer accept the exploitative labour conditions which had characterized life in bondage met with the same charge.

If Keckley's position as the president of the Contraband Relief Association gave her the authority to make such positive pronouncements about the state of Washington refugees, her distance from their desperation, coupled with her ability to organize efforts to relieve it, proved that African Americans were worthy of taking part in the public sphere of the newly reconstituted republic. To cement this impression, Keckley describes

both Frederick Douglass's admission into the official celebration of Abraham Lincoln's second inauguration and her own inclusion in Lincoln's tour of the defeated South.

The first event, Keckley writes, "was one of the largest receptions ever held in Washington. Thousands crowded the halls and rooms of the White House, eager to shake Mr. Lincoln by his hand, and receive a gracious smile from his wife" (Keckley 158). Although a number of African Americans had also turned out to show their appreciation, they were explicitly denied entrance. Among those excluded was "Mr. Frederick Douglass, the eloquent colored orator" (158). A white congressman picked Douglass out of the crowd and, after learning that he, like other African Americans, had been denied entry, asked Lincoln himself if he would like to be introduced to Douglass. Lincoln cordially obliged by shaking hands, expressing his admiration and telling Douglass that he "[valued Douglass's] opinions highly." Douglass proudly recounted the president's remarks for the benefit of Keckley and others at "a friend's house where a[n undoubtedly more inclusive] reception was being held"(160). Neither Douglass nor Keckley protests the exclusion which kept the rest of Washington's African American citizens out of the White House that evening.

Douglass was not always so uncritical of Lincoln. At the unveiling of a commemorative monument paid for by ex-slaves after the president's death, Douglass noted that Lincoln had initially opposed only the extension of slavery, a policy which served "[t]o protect, defend, and perpetuate slavery in the States where it existed." Only later did the president become convinced of the necessity of abolition (Life and Times

918). At the same time, however, both Douglass and Keckley felt that Douglass's admission into the White House reception was a momentous event. By choosing to recognize Douglass and his achievements in the public space which was the site of the nation's public sphere, Lincoln was symbolically accepting African-Americans into that public sphere. If an African American leader had been recognized as a subject who could occupy a public space and take part in the public sphere, his people, they must have felt, would soon follow. Since Lincoln did not long survive his second inauguration, it will never be known if his early conviction of African American inferiority would have been modified by post-war events.

This sense that African Americans -- or, more accurately, a select few -- were finally being admitted into the country's public sphere is cemented by Keckley's account of her own inclusion in the Lincolns' circle. Although she does not serve the country in any official capacity, Keckley has access to spaces which would seem to indicate an increase in status for both her and, by extension, other African Americans. When the Confederate capital of Richmond finally fell in 1865, Mrs. Lincoln asked Mrs. Keckley to accompany her as she joined Lincoln on a victorious foray into the defeated South. Presumably, Keckley was Mary Todd Lincoln's paid companion. Although their relationship was characterized by this fundamental inequity, Keckley says nothing of the nature of her employment, nor does she indicate whether or not the relationship between the Lincolns and herself was one of complete social equality, although it presumably was not. For example, it is doubtful that Keckley and the Lincolns dined at the same table.

Perhaps because such details would diminish the effectiveness of Keckley's account of her newly-won ability to occupy spaces so recently denied to African Americans, Keckley does not mention this social separation at this point. Rather, she revels in her ability to occupy what has so newly become a free space. Along with the rest of the presidential party, Keckley enters the now deserted Confederate Capitol building in Richmond. The building still shows signs of a rapid and desperate evacuation: "desks [were] broken, and papers scattered promiscuously in the hurried flight of the Confederate Congress. I picked up a number of papers, and, by curious coincidence, the resolution prohibiting all free coloured people from entering the state of Virginia" (Keckley 166). By issuing such a proclamation, the Confederate Congress had made a formal attempt to maintain the boundaries of slave space: until the defeat of its pro-slavery government, Virginia was to be slave space for all African Americans, making freedom--and a publically recognized subjectivity-- the sole prerogative of whites. Thus Keckley's entry into the state, and most significantly, into the Capitol building itself, represents the triumphant breaching of such boundaries. As a symbolic gesture, the once proscribed freewoman "sat in the chair that Jefferson Davis sometimes occupied; also in the chair of the Vice-President, Alexander H. Stephens" (166). Keckley notes that the women who cared for the Capitol building "scowled darkly upon our party as we passed through and inspected different rooms" (166). In spite of the disapproval of these unreconstructed Confederates, Keckley, her subjectivity officially recognized by the enforceable Emancipation Proclamation, is free to occupy the newly designated free space.

This new ability to be recognized as a subject in what was formerly slave space is paralleled by Keckley's acceptance into the domestic space of her former owners -- an event characterized, not by triumph, but by a careful and healing reconciliation. In an antebellum narrative, such a reunification would have been impossible: Harriet Jacobs made it clear that her former owners' repeated attempts to achieve a *rapprochement* were actually efforts to re-enslave her, while Douglass's antebellum fulminations against his master were so bitter that his 1877 reconciliation with Thomas Auld sparked criticism from African Americans who felt that Douglass had betrayed his earlier, militant self. "[T]his visit to Capt. Auld has been made the subject of mirth by heartless triflers, and by serious-minded men regretted as a weakening of my life-long testimony against slavery," Douglass later wrote (*Life and Times* 876). In spite of this, neither Douglass's nor Keckley's reconciliation excused the brutality of slavery. Rather, as William Andrews has noted, both former slaves "wrote their post-Civil War autobiographies in a mood of optimism and with a sincere desire to use their personal testimony as part of the national healing process that both hoped would follow the Civil War" (Andrews, "Reunion" 8). While the antebellum autobiographies written by Jacobs, Douglass and others had been designed to exacerbate the sectional divisions between "the people of North and the South so as to enlist the sympathies of white Northerners for the slave," the priorities of postbellum narrators like Keckley had changed:

The antebellum slave narrator had always insisted that the slave could free him/herself from the degrading effects of slavery. For the postbellum slave narrator to argue the same thing about the slaveholder was more than

morally consistent; it was politically expedient, given the progressive aims of autobiographers like Keckley . . . [who] wanted to believe that the white South could and would change, once liberated from slavery (12).

By actively seeking reconciliation, Keckley demonstrates moral leadership, becoming "an active agent in the reconstruction of the South, not . . . the white man's burden so often portrayed by New South politicians" (12).

Whatever the socio-political implications of her visit, it is also clear that the return South fills a deep, psychological need as well. After many years away, Keckley still sees Virginia as home: viewing the familiar environs of Petersburg from the presidential yacht, she observes that "[a] birthplace is always dear, no matter under what circumstances you were born, since it revives in memory the golden hours of childhood, free from philosophy, and the warm kiss of a mother" (Keckley 165). Keckley left her mother behind when she purchased her freedom; this separation, along with the deaths of her son and her estranged husband, apparently left her without familial ties. As I pointed out earlier, without constant, affective ties to people who will recognize her subjectivity within the domestic space she independently maintains, Keckley's Washington rooms cannot be described as a homeplace. This domestic recognition initially does not seem to be important, since Keckley's subjectivity is apparently recognized in other, public spaces. In spite of this recognition, or perhaps because of a personal lack in her now successful life, however, she is still drawn to the old home and the affective ties it represents. If Keckley feels herself to be an active agent in the national healing process, her need for the long-standing, affective ties of a homeplace is equally important.

"Often, during my residence in Washington, I recalled the past, and wondered what had become of those who claimed my first duty and first love," Keckley writes (241). Keckley's mother died shortly after the Garlands moved to Vicksburg, Mississippi, during the brief period between Keckley's manumission and the Civil War. Clearly then, the claimants to whom she refers are the Garlands, rather than any blood relatives. Indeed, Keckley's account shows how thoroughly the patriarchal, quasi-familial relationship between slave and slaveowner superceded the slave's own blood ties.

Mrs. Ann Garland, the mistress from whom I purchased my freedom in St. Louis, had five daughters, all lovely attractive girls. . . My mother took care of my son, and Miss Nannie Garland, the fourth daughter, when a wee thing, became my especial charge. She slept in my bed, and I watched over her as if she had been my own child. She called me Yiddie, and I could not have loved her more tenderly had she been the sister of my unfortunate boy (239).

While Keckley leaves no doubt that she loved her only child, her emotional and material resources were devoted to the nurturance of the white family. Had not freedom intervened, Keckley and her son would have been bound to the white foster-child by economic ties of ownership.

Given that Keckley was so determined to sever this economic tie, however, her desire to renew her relationship with the Garlands seems contradictory. At the beginning of her narrative, Keckley makes it clear that she was the household's economic mainstay. Thus, Keckley's avowed love for the Garlands, and her assertion that Northerners do not know "how warm is the attachment between master and slave" is all the more surprising, particularly since it is uncomfortably close to paternalist, proslavery arguments, which

likened the master-slave relationship to that tie between a father and his children (242).

Unlike her antebellum counterparts, however, Keckley was not attempting to gain support for the abolitionist cause. For this reason, she was free to recognize these two, seemingly irreconcilable elements: formerly exploited, she nonetheless loved, and was loved by, her former exploiter.

Although Keckley freely acknowledges these affective ties, her determined efforts to buy herself indicate that she never acquiesced in her economic exploitation. The dissolution of the economic ties which bound her to the Garlands allows her to meet with them on an entirely different footing. Although terrorism and legally enforced segregation would soon carve out and forcibly maintain a position for the African American as the white man's "inferior," Keckley, in this brief and hopeful period immediately after the Civil War, apparently meets the Garlands as an equal. She enters the South and the home of her former owners -- both former slave spaces -- as a freedwoman who has been formally recognized as a subject.

Accordingly, Keckley's account of her visit to "Nannie" Garland Meem's household in Mississippi contains no indication that her former owners spatially segregated the woman who had been their slave and "inferior." Greeted as a part of the family, Keckley is "carried into the house in triumph" by Nannie Garland Meem (whom Keckley had treated as her foster child), Maggie Garland, and Ann Garland, Nannie and Maggie's mother and Keckley's former mistress. When they find that their visitor has not eaten breakfast, Nannie and Maggie immediately volunteer to prepare it. In spite of Anne

Garland's instruction to leave this chore to the cook, her daughters "did not heed her. All rushed to the kitchen and brought me a nice hot breakfast" (252). The cook, properly astonished, declares that she "'nebber did see people carry on so. Wonder if I should go off and stay two or three years, if all ub you wud hug and kiss me so when I cum back?" (252).

In the antebellum narratives I have previously examined, the Southern kitchen is most emphatically slave space. Michael Vlach writes that the kitchen was a structure separated from the rest of the house in many upper-class Southern homes. While this was ostensibly done for practical considerations, the arrangement also separated the servers from the served (Vlach 43). The gospel-hungry slaves of Jacobs's narrative were relegated to the kitchen; punishment was meted out in it. Here, however, the kitchen is reintegrated into the domestic space of the Southern home. In spite of Anne Garland's admonition ("Here is the cook, she will get breakfast ready"), the served enter the kitchen to serve the woman who was once the server (251).

If the kitchen had been slave space, it is also true that plantation cooks had made it their undisputed territory: the brutal Aunt Katie of Douglass's My Bondage and My Freedom and Harriet Jacobs's protective friend Betty made the kitchen their own, daring to bar -- as far as they could -- white intruders. In contrast, the cook at Rude's Hill must merely step aside while her space is usurped in the visitor's honour. In this case, however, the apparent loss of black women's authority is apparently compensated, since freedom ostensibly gives these women the ability to build a homeplace of their own. Unlike Harriet

Jacobs, Keckley does not discuss the economic difficulties which could prevent this; rather, she concentrates upon her admission as a subject, and an apparent equal, into her former owner's domestic space. "I was comfortably quartered at Rude's Hill, and was shown every attention," Keckley writes. "We sewed together, talking of old times, and every day either drove out, or rode on horseback" (253). Keckley's ability to socialize in the domestic space of her former owners as a guest confirms that she has moved into the middle-class. After all, Keckley, too, is an employer: when news of the war's end came to Washington the previous year, she employed several girls in her sewing rooms (162). While the group which sewed together included Keckley, Ann Garland, and her daughters, it presumably excluded the cook whose speech, like the Washington contrabands, is rendered in dialect, a detail which Keckley uses to indicate differences in social status between African Americans.

Interestingly, Keckley never mentions the one memory which so consumes her in the earlier part of Behind the Scenes: her former master's assertion that she would never be "worth her salt." In spite of her early obsession, her prefatory remarks, though written in a different context, are particularly apt: "Here, as in all things pertaining to life, I can afford to be charitable" (xiii). Keckley tells "Miss Ann" that she has "but one unkind thought, and that is, that you did not give me the advantages of a good education" (257). Although her former mistress expresses regret, she adds that Keckley has "not suffered much on this score, since you get along in the world better than we who enjoyed every educational advantage in childhood" (257). By their own admission, the Garlands struggle

with maintaining their own domestic spaces, performing both their antebellum tasks and some of the work which slaves once did in what had formerly been slave, as well as domestic, space. "[Y]ou can imagine what a busy time I've had all summer, with a house full of company most of the time, and with very inefficient servants, and in some departments *none at all*; so I have had to be at times dining-room servant, house-maid, and the last and most difficult, dairy-maid," writes Nannie Garland Meems to Keckley. Nannie's sister "Mag," a governess in Amherst, Massachusetts plaintively writes that "[n]one of 'Miss Ann's' children were cut out for 'school-marms,' were they, Yiddie? I am sure I was only made to ride in my carriage, and play on the piano. Don't you think so?" (265-266) In contrast with the Garland women, who have been dependent upon slaves most of their lives, Keckley, inured to industry, had no difficulty in supporting herself and maintaining a domestic space of her own, a fact not lost on the Garlands. When Maggie Garland visited Washington she "came and stayed at my rooms, and expressed surprise to find me so comfortably fixed," Keckley reports (259).

Having achieved economic independence, Keckley is no longer subject to the Garland's economic will. Although she maintains a quasi-familial relationship with them, she emphasizes the Garland's expressions of dependence, rather than her own. "I love Lizzie next to mother," Maggie asserts. "She has been a mother to us all" (259). Her rather pathetic letter, which mourns the passage of her antebellum leisure, is signed "your child MAG," an expression which, according to Keckley, is "warmly appreciated by me" (264). Even as Keckley quietly affirms her equality, therefore, she still, like her mother

before her, invests her emotional resources in the white family. Still, distance and Keckley's own economic independence prevent this quasi-familial relationship from mimicking the antebellum relationship between Keckley's mother and the Garlands.

However, this is not the case with Keckley's employer, Mary Todd Lincoln. Indeed, the relationship between the two women is contradictory: while Mary Lincoln expresses the same emotional need as Maggie Garland, she is more obviously her chosen confidant's economic and social superior. If Keckley subtly asserts her equality in relation to her former owners, she does not consistently do this with Mary Lincoln. By devoting her emotional resources to the first lady and frequently upholding social differences between the two, Keckley slips back into the role of the quasi-familial nurturer she once played in the South. And yet, Keckley's candid, though quiet, criticism of the first lady shows that she was not always acquiescent. Ambivalent, Keckley combined the private, traditional role of servant/confidant, a role which demands deference and acquiescence, with that of the independent observer whose voice could be heard in the public sphere. It was only after the narrative was published that she learned the two roles were truly incompatible: however dependent the white family becomes upon its advisor, care-giver and confidant, that caregiver is bound by restrictions which keep her, the white family's "inferior," from acting and speaking "out of turn."

Keckley's mis-step is all the more curious since it is she, rather than Mary Todd Lincoln, who recognizes and imposes spatial boundaries between herself and the woman who is her social "superior." Just before Lincoln is elected for a second term, his wife

comes "to my apartments to consult me in relation to a dress" (152). Interestingly, although both Keckley's discussion of her visit to the Garlands and her description of the yacht trip she took with the Lincoln's do not mention the spatial segregation which would have been a sign of her own "inferior" status, segregation, in this case, is self imposed:

"And here let me remark, I never approved of ladies, attached to the Presidential household, coming to my rooms," Keckley writes decidedly.

I always thought that it would be more consistent with their dignity to send for me, and let me come to them, instead of their coming to me. I may have peculiar notions about some things, and this may be regarded as one of them. No matter, I have recorded my opinion. I cannot forget the associations of my early life (152-153).

Whatever Keckley's views, Mrs. Lincoln visits Keckley's rooms on at least one other occasion (174). President Johnson's married daughter also visits Keckley's rooms (224). Only Varina Davis, the wife of Confederate president Jefferson Davis, respects Keckley's stated protocol. The question then arises: why does Keckley, who apparently minimized any spatial segregation she experienced within the White House, insist, at least in print, on maintaining the spatial boundaries which demarcate the status differences between Mary Todd Lincoln and herself?

It could be that Keckley was politically proclaiming her right to a space of her own. As a slave, she could occupy no space that whites could not enter into; as a freedwoman, she had the right to set and enforce her space's boundaries. To enforce those boundaries by citing the duty of her employer, rather than her own, could have been part of the show of deference which was the necessary stock and trade of any successful African American

in an environment in which black success -- and pride in it -- could all too readily be deemed insolent. Indeed, Keckley's stated reason for enforcing boundaries resembles what seems to have been a traditional method of protecting the spaces which black women made their own: as I noted in my previous chapter, some white women were chased out of the plantation kitchen by slaves who preserved the right to defend the boundaries of the spaces provided them by saying that the occupation of such spaces was below the mistress's station. And yet, although this demarcation of boundaries may be taken as a subtle expression of power, Keckley, without irony, supports the status quo even as she simultaneously asserts her own independence and equality.

The first lady's emotional dependence upon Keckley becomes most evident during the period immediately after President Lincoln's assassination. When the dying and unconscious Lincoln is removed from the theatre in which he has been shot, his wife asks repeatedly for Keckley who, because of a messenger's error, does not arrive until morning, by which time the president has died. With the Cabinet and other state officials, Keckley views the body as it lies in state in the White House guest room before going, alone, to Mary Lincoln's room. That Keckley is able to view the body of the slain president in the presence of the Cabinet and other state officials around the coffin once again suggests her elevated status. Moreover, unlike these officials, Keckley is allowed into the surviving Lincolns' private circle in the apartments above: "Mrs. Lincoln never left her room, and while the body of her husband was being borne in solemn state from the Atlantic to the broad prairies of the West, she was weeping with her fatherless children in her private

chamber. She denied admittance to almost every one, and I was her only companion, except her children, in the days of her great sorrow" (193).

Keckley's movement from the space of public mourning to the Lincolns' private rooms suggests that her relationship with Mrs. Lincoln has become more personal as she takes on the role of comforter. At the same time, however, Keckley remains Mary Lincoln's employee: among the bills for President Lincoln's funeral (paid by the Commissioner of Public Buildings), is an itemized account of the services of "Elizabeth Kickley" which includes six weeks of "Services as first Class Nurse & attendant . . . at \$35.00 per week." The bill, which includes "Traveling and incidental expenses in attending Mrs. Lincoln to her home in Chicago, Ill." and "requisite mourning apparel" comes to \$360.00 (Washington 225). Although the two women increasingly share a private, domestic space in which Mrs. Lincoln repeatedly declares her friendship, Keckley's economic dependence continues an inequity which, if prolonged, could cost Keckley the hard-won work space/domestic space she calls her own.

It is evident that Keckley, in spite of her increased emotional involvement with Mary Lincoln, is wary of this loss of independence. She initially refuses to accompany Mary Lincoln to Chicago, in spite of the latter's expression of dependence. "You forget my business, Mrs. Lincoln," Keckley reminds the president's wife. "I cannot leave it. Just now I have the spring trousseau to make for Mrs. Douglas and I have promised to have it done in less than a week" (209). In spite of her pecuniary embarrassments, the former first lady presses Keckley, promising her that she will be "well rewarded" for this neglect of

business -- "if Congress makes an appropriation for my benefit" (209). Although depending on the vagaries of Congress for payment may seem too risky to Keckley, she asserts that something other than the promise of payment makes her hesitate. That something, however, remains unnamed, for the former president's wife is insistent: "I cannot do without you. . . .I have determined that you shall go to Chicago with me and you *must* go" (209-210). Mary Lincoln has a headache on the way to Chicago and, while Keckley cares for her, she repeats her mantra of dependence: "Lizabeth, you are my best and kindest friend, and I love you as my best friend" (210). This friendship, much like the relationship between a "mammy" and her charge, demands that Mary Lincoln be the centre of Keckley's attentions. At the same time she urges Keckley into a position of economic dependence which could remove the latter from the space she calls her own. Adrift from the moorings of her own space, therefore, Keckley is increasingly dependent upon her mistress's favour and more susceptible to being drawn permanently into the Mary Lincoln's domestic space.

Keckley's stated loyalty does not, however, silence her quiet criticism. When she helps the Lincoln family settle in at a summer resort, Keckley notes that "[t]he place had just been opened the summer before, and there was a newness about everything. The accommodations were not first-class, the rooms being small and plainly furnished" (211). Mrs. Lincoln's oldest son, Robert, declares that he "would almost as soon be dead as be compelled to remain three months in this dreary house," while his mother weeps hysterically because she has been "compelled to live here because I have not the means to

live elsewhere" (212-213). For Keckley, who has struggled so hard to obtain a space less than this, the Lincolns' situation at Hyde Park is "delightful": "I wondered how any one could call Hyde Park a dreary place. I had seen so much trouble in my life, that I was willing to fold my arms and sink into a passive slumber -- slumber anywhere, so great the longing of the soul was gratified -- rest" (212-214).

Since the promised Congressional appropriation does not materialize, Keckley returns to Washington to re-open her business. The next year Mary Lincoln, unable to maintain a house in Chicago, once again requests Keckley's assistance. "I have not the means . . . to meet the expenses of even a first class boarding house, and must sell out and secure cheap rooms at some place in the country," Mary Lincoln writes. Declaring herself "unable to live on \$1,700 a year," Mary Lincoln asks Keckley to meet her in New York "to assist me in disposing of a portion of my wardrobe" (267-268). Abandoning her own space once again, Keckley arranges to meet Mary Lincoln in New York.

Why does Keckley consistently jeopardize the independence -- and the space -- she has worked so hard to maintain? The trip to New York must have been taken at great economic cost: that June, Keckley reports, "[o]rders came in more rapidly than I could fill them" (222). Although Keckley was paid for her trouble, the earlier trip to Chicago had probably exacted a similar price. In spite of the fact that Mary Lincoln continually assures Keckley that these trips will be economically advantageous, it is clear that it is an emotional, rather than an economic, imperative that drives Keckley to remain in Mary Lincoln's employ. Of the earlier trip to Chicago, Keckley writes: "I strongly objected;

but I had been with [Mary Lincoln] so long, that she had acquired great power over me" (209). Although Keckley's combined work/domestic space is intermittently filled by employees who undoubtedly recognize Keckley's status as a subject, the ties Keckley forms with these women are not the same as those which make a domestic space a homeplace. Indeed, Keckley always speaks of her "work-girls" as an undifferentiated group who reply to her in a "chorus" (223). Apparently without domestic ties, therefore, Keckley is peculiarly susceptible to Mary Lincoln's emotionally extortative nature. Keckley's own explanation for her actions, though simpler, is just as emotionally compelling: "[Mary Lincoln] was the wife of Abraham Lincoln, the man who had done so much for my race, and I could refuse to do nothing for her, calculated to advance her interests" (269).

Even before Keckley makes the journey to New York, it is clear that in spite, or perhaps because of her privilege, Mary Lincoln is unable to negotiate the city's public spaces. The president's widow sends a letter to Keckley, advising the seamstress to "secure rooms for her at the St. Denis Hotel in the name of Mrs. Clarke, as her visit was to be *incog*." (271) Keckley finds these directions "startling": "I had never heard of the St. Denis, and therefore presumed that it could not be a first-class house. And I could not understand why Mrs. Lincoln should travel, without protection, under an assumed name. I knew that it would be impossible for me to engage rooms at a strange hotel for a person whom the proprietors knew nothing about" (271). Mrs. Keckley realizes, in a way that Mrs. Lincoln does not, that space defines one's status. Away from the domestic space

which would normally demarcate her respectability, Mrs. Lincoln has entered a promiscuous public space unprotected by either the shield of a suitable companion or a recognizable name -- both of which, in Keckley's words, would "ensure the proper respect." Without this demonstrable respectability, Mrs. Lincoln's position as a lady -- as a representative of True Womanhood -- is endangered.

Although she does not recognize it, Mary Lincoln's response to the hotel's racial segregation further endangers her. When she attempts to secure an adjoining room for Mrs. Keckley, the clerk, who is, in Keckley's words, "too self-important to be obliging, or even courteous," makes the "pointed rejoinder" that he has no room for Mrs. Keckley on the same floor, "[f]riend of yours or not" (275). When the hotel rents Keckley a room on the fifth floor, Mary Lincoln imperiously demands to be moved there as well, declaring, "What is good enough for [Keckley] is good enough for me" (275-276). The former first lady pays dearly for her impetuous social defiance: "I never expected to see the widow of President Lincoln in such dingy, humble quarters," Keckley writes (276).

Accustomed to domestic spaces which, as I have already demonstrated, were shared by people of differing status, Mary Lincoln attempts to transfer this custom to this public space. In some cases, this was entirely acceptable to the dominant culture: as a nursemaid in the North, Harriet Jacobs, "[b]eing in servitude to the Anglo-Saxon race," was able to ride in a first-class railway carriage -- a right normally denied her (176). However, without a clear indication of her social superiority, Mary Lincoln's desire to share a space with a black woman puts her own position in question. No matter what her

financial status, Keckley is forced to occupy a space reserved for servants and African Americans -- the two being, for the hotel staff, synonymous. As I noted in my previous chapter, black women were routinely omitted from the cult of "True Womanhood," since race, class and the sexual and material realities of slavery prevented them from possessing the prerequisites of frailness, whiteness and chastity. Thus, Mary Lincoln's anonymity and her determination to share a space with Keckley is seen an indication of the former's dubious social status. When Keckley is turned away from the dining room the evening of her arrival, the former president's wife proposes to dine elsewhere. Keckley, however, stands firm: "No, Mrs. Lincoln, I shall not go outside of the hotel to-night, for I realize your situation, if you do not. Mrs. Lincoln has no reason to care what these people may say about her as Mrs. Lincoln, but she should be prudent, and give them no opportunity to say anything about her as Mrs. Clarke" (283). Going out into the streets at night unaccompanied would only confirm the hotel clerk's suspicions that the mysterious guest is a woman of questionable morals. Convincing Mrs. Lincoln of this, however, proves difficult: "She was so frank and impulsive that she never once thought that her actions might be misconstrued" (283). Since it does not occur to Mary Lincoln to request room service, Keckley must wait until morning, when her sympathetic employer takes her to a restaurant on Broadway. Keckley does not indicate whether or not the two shared a table, a phenomenon which, according to Frederick Douglass, frequently drew attention, if not hostility, in the antebellum North (My Bondage and My Freedom 402).

Interestingly, although Keckley uses spatial proximity in order to claim a publicly

recognized subjectivity in the White House, she is well aware that, outside of this space of governance, African Americans are still confined to the marginal spaces reserved for the "other," whose subjectivity remains unrecognized. Even as she celebrates the progress which has allowed her to enter the White House as a free and independent businesswoman she is subjected to the segregation which undoubtedly characterized her antebellum existence. Keckley's recognition of her progress on one hand and her undoubted awareness of her continuing socio-spatial realities on the other create a curious contradiction in her text: while, as I have noted, she insists upon recognizing the social superiority of the First Lady, she also unmistakably places herself on an equal footing with her employer. It is clear that, in undertaking the delicate business of selling the first lady's clothing, the two women act together.

Although the two women canvas the second-hand clothes dealers of the city, Mrs. Lincoln is unable to command the price she desires for her clothing. Attempting to sell her jewellery, Mary Lincoln becomes acquainted with two "commission brokers" named Mr. Keyes and Mr. Brady, who are soon apprised of her true identity. "I regret to say," Keckley writes, "[that] she was guided by their counsel" (288). This "counsel" includes instructions to compose a series of letters to Mr. Brady. These letters, which indicate that "*urgent necessity*" compels the former first lady to sell her belongings, are then shown by Brady to "certain [Republican] politicians," who are told that the letters will be published "if [Brady's monetary] demands, as Mrs. Lincoln's agent were not complied with" (294). This political blackmail proves to be unsuccessful. The visit "had proved disastrous, and

[Mary Lincoln] was goaded into more desperate measures. . . .She gave Mr. Brady permission to place her wardrobe on exhibition for sale, and authorized him to publish the letters in the World" (296). She then packs her bags and leaves for Chicago, leaving Keckley to look after the business.

The sale and its surrounding publicity invited public criticism: as Keckley had feared, revelations of the former first lady's decision to travel incognito produced some harsh commentary. Mary Lincoln claimed, through a statement Keckley made to the New York Evening News, that she "adopted this course from motives of delicacy, desiring to avoid publicity" (306). Having inappropriately ventured outside of the spaces which designate her status and respectability, Mrs. Lincoln was forced to defend actions in the newspaper -- something which could only further taint her reputation. Mrs. Lincoln's actions were not the only things which provoked criticism: the price of the dresses displayed was considered much too high, and their value, already disputed, was probably further depreciated by the mauling that they received from curious onlookers.

Although Mrs. Keckley's presence in the White House can be viewed as a symbol of the African American's new ability to take part in the public sphere of the nation, it is true that her relationship with Mrs. Lincoln was primarily played out in domestic space as part of the domestic sphere. However, once Mrs. Lincoln had crossed into the public space, bringing her financial troubles into public sphere, Mrs. Keckley's role became public as well. The "mammy" and private comforter became the manager of her charge's business affairs. Keckley even became something of a press agent: "So many erroneous

reports were circulated" about Mary Lincoln's business affairs that Keckley provided accurate -- and sympathetic -- "memoranda" to the New York Evening News for an article on the subject. The article, in turn, may have been the genesis for Behind the Scenes.

Writing of the nation's response to Mrs. Lincoln's pecuniary embarrassments, The Evening News reported that "the colored people are moving in this matter." This movement, a significant contrast to the apathy of the whites Brady and Keyes had attempted to enlist in the former first lady's cause, was prompted by Keckley herself (313). As the founder of Washington's Contraband Relief Association she put her contacts to good use, corresponding with both Frederick Douglass and Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, both of whom were prominent members of Washington's African American community. Keckley reproduces the four cordial letters of advice Douglass wrote to her on the subject. Although he found the idea of a series of benefit lectures by himself and others dubious, he wrote that "if the thing is done, it should be done on a grand scale" (316). The plan, however, came to naught when Mary Lincoln rejected the African American community's offer of aid. When she changed her mind and deigned to accept it, Douglass and Garnet, whose offers had initially been declined, would not take an active part in the matter.

Other plans also failed to materialize. Accompanied by Henry Highland Garnet, Keckley called on Horace Greeley, the editor of the New York Tribune. Although Brady and Keyes proposed to send circulars around the country appealing for aid, the two businessmen could not obtain the support of prominent men, whose signatures "would give character and responsibility to the movement" (324). Greeley himself refused to get

involved in any scheme run by the two men: "Nobody knows who they are, or what they are" (324). Greeley's suspicion was well founded: against Mary Lincoln's wishes, and undoubtedly for their own profit, Brady and Keyes attempted to take the former first lady's belongings on tour. This scheme also failed. Finally, after much scandal, Mary Lincoln's goods were returned to her. Although she had hoped to profit from their sale, the few articles sold did not cover Brady and Keyes's eight-hundred dollar bill for the venture's expenses.

While Keckley was not attached to her employer's domestic space, she lost the space she had so strived to maintain in Washington:

Weeks lengthened into months, and at Mrs. Lincoln's urgent request I remained in New York, to look after her interests. When she left the city I engaged quiet lodgings. . . where I remained about two months, when I moved to 14 Carroll Place, and became one of the regular boarders of the house. Mrs. Lincoln's venture proved so disastrous that she was unable to reward me for my services, and I was compelled to take in sewing to pay for my daily bread. My New York expedition has made me richer in experience, but poorer in purse (327).

At the time of writing, Keckley, still in New York, "practised the closest economy" as she wrapped up Mary Lincoln's disastrous business affairs which, Keckley candidly wrote, "demanded much of my time, and . . . was a constant source of trouble to me" (326).

While Keckley's activities within the African American community had made her a public figure in her own right, her role as Mary Lincoln's confidant had forced her into acting in the public sphere, and in public spaces, on the former first lady's behalf. The situation was a precarious one: Keckley was cut off from the work and domestic space

she had created for herself and those public spaces within Washington -- such as the 15th Street ("coloured") Presbyterian Church -- which she could occupy without the humiliating segregation she experienced in public spaces at large. Although I have noted that Keckley's account of her occupation of the White House's domestic space seemed to symbolize African Americans' newly-won claim to the building's public space, site of the public sphere, Keckley was, in the end, unable to translate her domestic role as dressmaker, nurse, "mammy" and confidant into the public one of commentator.

Tied as she was to the former first lady's activities, Keckley felt that she must defend both herself and her employer. She did so in print, trusting that her readers would hear her out fairly. As Frances Smith Foster notes, however, Keckley was a victim of her own success: "She allowed her faith in the efficacy of truth, or her belief in her own specialness, to blind her to the clear evidence that Anglo-Americans routinely resented and resisted any African American volunteering any opinion on any matter that did not focus upon slavery or racial discrimination" (*Written By Herself* 128). Still, the book may not have had such damaging consequences had Keckley herself not been betrayed.

Although Keckley was literate, she, like Harriet Jacobs, did not have any formal education. Although only her name appears on the title page, it is known that Keckley depended upon her editor, James Redpath, for advice. An abolitionist and advisor to Lincoln, Redpath had published works by African American novelist, historian, autobiographer and playwright William Wells Brown and had himself authored a biography of radical abolitionist John Brown. Keckley entrusted Redpath with the letters

she had received from Mary Lincoln with the understanding that Redpath would select pertinent quotations for the text. Instead, Redpath, without Keckley's consent, published the letters verbatim at the end of Behind the Scenes (Washington 238-239). In the letters Mary Lincoln bemoans her fate and vituperatively criticises Republican politicians who refuse to help her in her hour of need.

Initially, the book was moderately advertised in The American Literary Gazette & Publisher's Circular as a book "crowded with incidents of a most romantic as well as tragic interest, covering a period of forty years" (Washington 231). Soon, however, the book's autobiographical aspects were ignored; it became "A LITERARY THUNDERBOLT" and "The Great Sensational Disclosure by Mrs. Keckley" (232-234). One New York newspaper called Keckley's book "grossly and shamelessly indecent." Its publication was a crime akin to "the listening at keyholes, or the mean system of espionage which unearths family secrets with a view to blackmailing the unfortunate victims" (quoted in Foster Written By Herself 128). A parody called Behind the Seams: By a Nigger Woman Who Took in Work from Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Davis appeared in New York. Robert Lincoln had Keckley's book suppressed and angrily refused to see its author, who went to his office in order to defend herself. Jennifer Fleischner writes that, "[t]hough variously motivated, the offended all seem to have been antagonized by Keckley's trespass across the racially defined social, class, and behavioral barriers that legalized slavery had reinforced" (95). Elizabeth Keckley never saw Mary Lincoln again.

Although John Williams asserts that Mrs. Keckley "continued to sew for the best

families in Washington," the relative poverty in which she spent her final years suggests that the scandal did great damage to Keckley's business. Keckley never sewed for the women of the White House again. Although she spent 1892-93 teaching sewing at Ohio's Wilberforce University (her son's *alma mater*), she was later forced to depend on the eight, and later twelve, dollar monthly pension she received from the government -- compensation she received for loss of her only son. While the latter half of Behind the Scenes is taken up with Mrs. Lincoln's efforts to extract money from a government which, she felt, was morally obligated to pay her bills, Keckley had to be persuaded to apply for this pension (Keckley 236).

Without a homeplace of her own and long since unable to maintain the work space/domestic space she had occupied at the height of her career, Keckley spent her last years in a room of the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children, an institution which she herself had helped to found. John Washington describes the room as "a little dingy one in the basement with one window facing the setting sun. Over the dresser was a picture of Mrs. Lincoln" (222). Although she was not a pauper -- friends who presumed that she was later learned that she paid a small sum for her room -- Mrs. Keckley occupied a space which reflected a profound loss of status. The loss of the ties she had formed with Mrs. Lincoln in the latter's domestic space seems to have produced a psychological upheaval: Washington reports that, "[l]ike Mrs. Lincoln [, Mrs. Keckley] suffered greatly from headaches and crying spells nearly all the time. She would never tell anyone what she grieved about. All day long she looked at Mrs. Lincoln's picture above the dresser,

and seldom left her room for meals" (240-241). When her bills, including one for her own grave and headstone, were paid, Keckley's estate of \$179.11 went to the National Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children.

Although Mary Lincoln was significantly in debt after her husband's assassination, her money worries were purely psychological. Awarded \$22,000 in 1865 -- the rest of President Lincoln's salary -- she was haunted by an irrational fear of poverty, a fear which was not assuaged by a Congressional decision to award her \$3,000 a year for life. A compulsive spender, her mania for buying and hoarding objects grew worse over the years. She became increasingly paranoid and, in 1875, her only surviving son Robert had her committed to an asylum for a time. Curiously, she too died without a domestic space of her own. When Mary Todd Lincoln died in her sister's house in 1882, \$3,000 in gold was found in the top drawer of her dresser.

Conclusion

My conclusion represents a beginning rather than an ending.

In 1877 the newly elected president Rutherford B. Hayes appointed Frederick Douglass as U.S. marshal for the District of Columbia. Such an appointment had been long overdue: though he was aware of its shortcomings, Douglass had faithfully campaigned for the Republican party for many years. Douglass biographer William McFeely notes that this was the first appointment requiring Senate approval to be given to an African American (289). From her home in Massachusetts Harriet Jacobs wrote to tell Douglass "how anxiously I have perused the papers the last few days and how happy I was made this morning . . . to see your nomination confirmed There is not a man living that I should so rejoice to see hold this position at the Capitol of the Nation" (quoted in McFeely 289).

Although Douglass was able to distribute some minor civil service posts to other African Americans, Hayes pointedly relieved him of the marshal's most visible duties: Douglass did not present each guest to the president during formal receptions. Hayes' reasoning was obvious: in order to resolve an electoral dispute in his favour, he had agreed to withdraw federal troops which, until then, had remained in the occupied South. In order to signal his conciliatory stance, he removed Douglass from the White House itself. "[N]ot a black person in America . . . was unaware that this duty had been

eliminated to prevent too great a black presence in the Republican palace," McFeely writes.

Although Douglass determinedly continued to view the appointment as an honour and, despite criticism, refused to resign, his position was not a sign of progress. Left unprotected, now African American voters would once again become disenfranchised and the segregation which Douglass, Jacobs, and Keckley found when they reached the North would soon formally establish itself in the South. Homeplace would become more important than ever.

Since I have examined only four narratives, my thesis should not be seen as a thoroughgoing attempt to trace the origins of the racial segregation which became endemic in postbellum America. That being said, however, I must state that this examination of how three African Americans perceived, and responded to, the social space which they inhabited is of some importance. While Douglass, Jacobs and Keckley cannot be said to stand for all African Americans of the period they, by recording their perceptions of the spatial limitations which constrained them, their struggles to achieve what they conceived to be the liberating possibility of free space, and their attempts to maintain the life-giving nurturance of homeplace, provide us with an inkling of how African Americans would later deal with the problem of the twentieth century, the problem of the color line.

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