The White Presence and the Portrayal of White Characters in African American Slave Narratives

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Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer i povijesti – nastavnički smjer

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Diplomski rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jasna Poljak Rehlicki

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Master's Thesis

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IZJAVA

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Abstract:

The paper analyzes three slave narratives (*The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave*, *Twelve Years a Slave*, and *The Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl)* in order to explore the representation of white characters and white societies of nineteenth century America. The approach of black authors like Frederick Douglass, Solomon Northup, and Harriet Jacobs to the depiction of the oppressor is a complex collection of the white character's appearance, morals, personality, and behavior, but most importantly his/her treatment of the black protagonist and other slaves. The slave narrative genre outlines the slave's journey from slavery to freedom with a number of white characters involved in that journey in one way or another. The aim of the paper is to explain the creation of white stereotypes and categorize the white characters according to different elements of their portrayal in each of the three analyzed slave narratives. The paper also examines the effects of slavery on the white characters in slave narratives and the way it influences not only their moral deterioration, but also the deterioration of the American white society.

Keywords: Frederick Douglass, Solomon Northup, Harriet Jacobs, slavery, white characters, stereotypes

Introduction

In the history of humankind, there were many natural disasters, but nothing can cause more damage to a human than a fellow human can. When Solomon Northup, the author of one of the three primarily analyzed literary works in this paper, was kidnapped and sold into slavery, he stated: "I had not then learned the measure of 'man's inhumanity to man,' nor to what limitless extent of wickedness he will go for the love of gain" (Northup 24). The premise of achieving material gain by perpetuating evil towards fellow humans bore certain systems and institutions. Exactly that kind of institution is slavery. An institution that in other forms originated in the ancient civilizations of the Near East, Greece, and Rome but gained its most vile form between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in a place that was supposed to be built on the ideals of freedom and equality. During that same period, "nearly thirteen million Africans were enslaved and shipped west across the Atlantic" (Warren 13) to the place Europeans, upon its discovery, called the New World (North and South America). Even though slavery existed before, it was never strictly limited to specific racial groups like it was in the New World. The enslavement and oppression of the black race in North America started in 1619 "when the privateer The White Lion brought 20 enslaved African ashore in the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia" ("Slavery in America"). The oppressors were white European settlers who recognized slavery as the system that would bring in the biggest material gain.

Over the years, the individuals of the oppressed black race who escaped slavery started writing and publishing literary works narrating their life and journey from slavery to freedom. These literary works were written as autobiographical accounts that served not only as literary texts but more importantly as political texts countering proslavery ideas "by embracing distinctly American ideals and values" (Fisch 2) and pointing out the hypocrisy of the "newly emerging Republic" (2). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the slave narratives, under the influence of anti-slavery movements and societies, started focusing completely on the idea of abolishing slavery in America while "exposing the evils of the Southern plantation (and the false paternalistic myths supporting it) became the absolute priority" (Gould 19). The black protagonist's journey from slavery to freedom was the central theme of slave narratives, depicting many different characters along the way. Naturally, the black protagonist was a slave whose daily life along with other slaves was very important (19).

This paper will primarily focus on three slave narratives with three different narrators and protagonists who met a wide array of characters on their journey and offered some form of portrayal and judgment of their character based on their relationships with them. Besides the portrayal of other slaves, their struggles, and communities which are in the foreground of many other literary and historical texts analyzing slave narratives (like John W. Blassingame´s *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, which is one of the theoretical backgrounds of this paper), there are also white characters whose portrayal often remains undiscussed or simplified. Therefore, this paper will analyze the portrayal of many different white characters and white societies depicted in Solomon Northup´s *Twelve Years a Slave*, Frederick Douglass´s *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave* and Harriet Jacobs´s *The Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

In the first part of the paper the theoretical background to the topic is given with the analysis of how and why the white character was presented by black authors in comparison to the black character by white authors, and how were the literary stereotypes of both races created and what ideas and movements influenced the authors' approach to white characters in slave narratives. Following that, the white American societies of both the North and the South are presented from the perspective of the former black slave with criticism and praise of each society and special attention to its moral and political values. The third part of the paper explains the effects of slavery, but not on the black slaves suffering under oppression and rather on the white characters committing the oppression. The fourth part presents a wide array of white characters in each of the three primarily analyzed slave narratives according to the three white stereotypes created based on their treatment and relationships with the black protagonist and other slaves. All adult white characters in slave narratives are therefore categorized in those three white stereotypes created by black authors. The depiction of each character's personality and appearance, the symbolism of each character, its complexity and development through the narrative are all discussed. The white stereotype created of each character depends on his/her treatment of the black protagonist and other slaves. More specifically, on the level of kindness or rejection they show towards the system of slavery. The last part of the paper includes the approach of black authors to the depiction of white children and the impacts of slavery on the new generations. With their portrayal of the white race in slave narratives, the black authors reveal if there is hope for reconciliation and co-existence of the two races.

1. White Character as Seen by Black Authors

In an article for the *Journal of Negro Education* in 1933, African American poet Sterling A. Brown exposed the texts of numerous white authors trying to negatively portray the character of black slaves and in general black people. Some of these authors were simply white Southerners enthralled by the politics and beliefs of the time, while others were even ex-governors of some slave states. Each of them had a simple intention in writing these texts and that was to reaffirm and present once again the simplicity and inferiority of black character to their white readers. The major intent was to set up multiple stereotypes that were supposed to represent the entirety of one race, obviously focused solely on the supposed flaws of black character.

One of these important attempts to establish black stereotypes was made by a Southern writer known as "a valid interpreter of the Negro" (Brown 2) Roark Bradford, who defended his categorization and explanations of black character by stating in the preface of his collection of African American folk tales *Ol´ Man Adam an' His Chillun*: "I believe I know them pretty well. I was born on a plantation that was worked by them; I was nursed by one as an infant and I played with one when I was growing up…I have watched them at home, in church, at their picnics and their funerals" (qtd. in Brown 2). These circumstances, Bradford believed, gave him the right to judge the character of one whole group of people and divide them into three stereotypes that simply reinforce the notable views of the American South. Other than that, and the "humorous" nature of the folk tales, Braford only managed to show how even in a serious and religious discourse it would not be a great idea to accept the ideas of a white Southerner of the time as factual scientific discourse (2).

Another white author (a Northerner by birth and regarded as a legitimate and impactful historian) James Ford Rhodes, expressed the lack of anything of value in black characters or their labor and confirmed the inferiority of the black race while calling these Southern claims "scientific truth" and providing the justification of slavery (Fogel 155). Showing the black character as inferior and nothing else made these accounts even more invalid and detested by everybody outside of the American South. The simple notions of "negro's three-fold inferiority: physically (except for his adaptability to cotton fields and rice swamps), mentally, and morally" (Brown 4) along with religious arguments gained from an obvious subjective reading of the Bible, only managed to approve the depiction of white character and white mentality by black authors.

On the other hand, if Roark Bradford's explanation of legitimacy of his judgment of the black character was taken into consideration, then similarly, black authors can construct a legitimate portrayal of the white character based on their unfortunate circumstances, coexistence, and interaction with white people. Whether this view and presentation of the white character by black authors were fair and objective is another thing to be examined. According to African American author and activist Gloria Jean Watkins (also known as "bell hooks"), African Americans have "special knowledge about whiteness" (qtd. in Japtok 6) which comes from the time of enslavement that they acquired as means of helping "black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society" (qtd. in Japtok 6). This notion symbolized one of the most important themes in slave narratives, especially highlighted in the three narratives in the focus of this paper, and that is the importance of knowledge in achieving both enslavement and freedom. Both white and black authors of the time wrote about certain knowledge that white participants of slavery in the US (the oppressors) had to possess to be successful more than others and black participants of slavery (the oppressed) had to possess to achieve their freedom. Trudier Harris called this naturally gained knowledge of whiteness and white people "the necessity within the black folk community for understanding more about the oppressor than the oppressor understands about Blacks" (qtd. in Japtok 6). The knowledge of white habits, morals, and character was necessary for black people not only to achieve freedom but also to merely survive slavery. Supporting this notion, twentieth century historian and professor, Kenneth M. Stampp exclaims that the "management of whites was as central to these slaves as the management of Negroes was to the masters" (qtd. in Fogel 170).

Furthermore, black children were taught the ways of submissiveness and conformity and were introduced to the white character as seen through the eyes of their elders and their experience with white people (Blassingame 188). A young slave learned how "to hold his tongue around white folks" (187), and "to avoid the blows of the master" (191). This was the knowledge that was orally passed on along with the image of the white character. This image was, consequentially to circumstances, always connected to the brutal and negative experiences the white race brought to them: "Uncompromisingly harsh, the portrait which the slaves drew of cruel masters was filled with brutality and horror. The slaves described masters of this stripe as besotted, vicious, deceitful, coarse, licentious, bloodthirsty, heardess, and hypocritical Christians who were pitiless fiends" (262).

Although historians usually take a careful approach with such extreme depictions, there was plenty of different written evidence along with the slave narratives that the image was not far off, no matter how much Southern romanticists denied it (262-3). Black authors like Frederick

Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Solomon Northup were undoubtedly taught this image, and, influenced by their own limited experience created certain white stereotypes. And yet, unlike Bradford and other white writers describing a black character, black authors gave the reader a complex and multi-layered white character with depictions of even the most detested of positions of white slaveholders varying from "there never was a more kind, noble, candid, Christian man" (Northup 51) to "a man in whose heart the quality of kindness or of justice is not found" (108). This only made the testimonies in their narratives and the presentation of the white character from their point of view seem, at the bare minimum, more objective than vice versa. Still, although trying to limit the criticism of white character to Southerners and upholding the abolitionist agenda that will be explained later, black writers with the slave narratives created a space where the white character's flaws can be expressed and criticized effectively as long as encapsulated in the system of slavery. The anti-slavery arguments became much more acceptable when they were centered around the themes like: "the depravity of Southern planters and the irrepressible fact of sexual miscegenation, the hypocrisy of Southern Christianity, scenes of brutal whipping and torture, rebellious slaves who are murdered, and the strategic mechanisms by which the plantation maintains what Douglass called the 'mental and moral darkness of enslavement'" (Gould 19). The criticism of the white character and society in slave narratives was therefore understandable and seemingly much more objective in depiction of "the oppressor," than the portrayal of basic black stereotypes by white authors of the time.

1.1. Creating Stereotypes

Before presenting the different stereotypes authors of both black and white races created for the other side, it is important to understand what influences the creation of stereotypes and how credible can they possibly be. According to the twentieth century American historian and expert on the topic of American slavery, John W. Blassingame it is questionable to which extent the "outsiders" can evaluate another individual's behavior since a lot of individual personality is really "socially non-perceivable, hidden, or invisible" (Blassingame 226) in addition to the obvious subjectivity authors possess based on their experiences, circumstances, and agendas (226). Therefore, "any attempt to generalize about individual and group personality traits based on stereotypes" (226) is to be approached with caution by historians and everybody reading slave narratives especially since the simple notion of drawing conclusions about a whole group of people

based on the limited experience is unreliable on its own (226). There are a lot of factors that can influence the created stereotypes of another group of people and their "sham characteristics" that psychologist Gustav Ichheiser defined as "attributed to an individual from the point of view of other people" (qtd. in Blassingame 226-7). It is possible that these "sham characteristics" are mere misinterpretations of another's character which then results in the wrong assessment of the character and on a bigger scale creation of certain stereotypes of another group (226-7).

To understand the images of white people in the slave narratives, it is necessary to acknowledge how white authors of the time portrayed the enslaved black people. The most important source of information for the understanding of slave character were writers and journalists of the Antebellum South as their writing and literature shaped the public opinion of the slaves and blacks in general. Naturally, the easiest and most logical way of approaching the portrayal of the black character for white and especially Southern authors was creating literary stereotypes. The only way of analyzing even the stereotypical portrayal of a slave was by examining not just one, but at least a couple of stereotypes, and to compare them in order to see how valid they were (Blassingame 224). As already mentioned, "a valid interpreter of the Negro" (Brown 2) Roark Bradford, expressed his "scientific" division of black race in "three types of Negroes" (qtd. in Brown 2) while using the most derogatory expressions and detailed explanations for each of the three: "the nigger, the 'colored person,' and the Negro-upper case N" (qtd. in Brown 2). Arguing the simplistic and uneducated view of black people, Brown exclaimed: "The Negro has met with as great injustice in American literature as he has in American life. The majority of books about Negroes merely stereotype Negro character" (2). He also added the notion that these white authors just used "exaggeration or omissions" with a clear intention of justifying the system of slavery by focusing only on the inferiority of the black character based on their supposed experience and examination of it (3).

In his book *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, Blassingame extracted three literary stereotypes of the slave character, Sambo, Jack, and Nat, that he recognized in Southern literature of the time. The main characteristic that each of the stereotypes was focused on was docility and subordination. Blassingame explains that "Jack worked faithfully as long as he was well treated" (Blassingame 224-5), "Nat was the incorrigible runaway, the poisoner of white men, the ravager of white women who defied all the rules of plantation society" (224-5), and, finally, the one that was deemed as the most desirable among the slaveholding class and the most common one in Southern literature was Sambo. Blassingame describes Sambo as "indolent, faithful, humorous, loyal, dishonest, superstitious, improvident, and musical, Sambo was

inevitably a clown and congenitally docile" (224-5). The historians read these accounts and accepted this docile version as the correct version based on the large number of accounts that provided this stereotype in literature (226). What is apparent in the analysis of these stereotypes is that the Southern authors were contradictory in their portrayals. The stereotype of the docile and simple Sambo has been the most effective way of combating the anti-slavery literature coming mainly from the North. It reduced all slaves to Sambos thus justifying enslavement. Also, it relieved the Southern public worried about Nat, the rebellious spirit of the slave stereotype, who, in their view, endangered white man's safety.

In slave narratives examined in this paper, there are few examples of this character. One of them being Mary, the black girl Solomon Northup meets on the boat taking him to Louisiana whom he briefly describes as "one of those, and there are very many, who fear nothing but their master's lash, and know no further duty than to obey his voice" (Northup 33). In slave narratives those simplistic "Sambo" stereotype characters are often portrayed, contrary to the Southern white literary works, in a very negative light by other slaves and the authors themselves. Such was the character of the "mischievous housemaid" (Jacobs 171) Jenny who posed an actual threat to the protagonist's escape and freedom because all the black characters in the narrative were convinced that "Jenny would inform Dr. Flint in less than twenty-four hours" of Linda´s whereabouts (171). This threat and the obstruction of slave's chance for escape is undoubtedly the most important criteria for the judgement of both black and white character in slave narratives.

What is true for both black and white stereotypes is that the only way to assess them as satisfactory is if there are no contradictions and if the details given about the stereotypical character provide the reader with something more than just the degrading remarks about how simple and subordinate the character is. Southern white literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth century tells "us little about slave's behavior and even less about the slave's inner life, his thoughts, actions, self-concepts, or personality" (Blassingame 11). This was the exact thing that differentiated the creation of stereotypes by white pro-slavery authors and black authors. The lacking elements of black character in white literature, pointed out by Blassingame, are referenced and in detail depicted in white characters of black slave narratives. Mentions of their appearance, rise in society, vices, flaws, habits, familial relationships, social interactions, and, naturally, the treatment of slaves is what adds to the complexity of the character. The stereotypes that can be recognized in the white characters of the analyzed slave narratives could be grouped in three categories based on the specific criteria. All these stereotypes and the criteria used will be further explained and exemplified later in the paper.

1.2.The Abolitionist Agenda and White Audience

Important aspects in the analysis of slave narratives are the circumstances and influences that affected authors during their writing process. In this case, special attention must be given to the abolitionist idea and the abolitionist movement. The political agenda of the movement and the pure intention of African American authors to help black men, women, and children "who are suffering wrongs so foul, that our ears are too delicate to listen to them" (Jacobs 6) had a strong impact on, among other elements, the portrayal of white characters in the slave narratives.

The rise of the slave narratives in the 1830s was closely connected to the rise of the political abolitionist agenda of fighting against slavery. They were a crucial part of the fight with many of the authors themselves being involved in the abolitionist movement and its activities. Therefore, slave narratives can be considered texts of great political value, especially at the time of their publishing. That political fight was being fought on multiple fronts, but with the same target – the American mind. Convincing white Americans, especially Northerners, of the wickedness and immorality of slavery became the primary goal of the abolitionist movement. To do that they had to beat the racist mindset that was still present and the misconceptions of the Northern public about the nature of the institution of slavery. The ones spreading those misconceptions were mostly Southern pro-slavery writers and defenders by using the already explained stereotypes of African Americans. The main opponent, therefore, was the Southern pro-slavery writing that had a parallel rise with the rise of abolitionist writing (Dickson and Bruce 28-9). It was a battle of arguments with each side trying to discredit and find a fault with the other side's arguments. The most prevalent arguments of pro-slavery authors were "that people of African descent were intellectually and morally inferior to Europeans and Euro-Americans and were, therefore, fit only for slavery" (29-30) which was a racist prejudice that gained a similar kind of counter-argument in almost all slave narratives: "They are held in bondage, generation after generation, deprived of mental improvement, and who can expect them to possess much knowledge? If they are not brought down to a level with the brute creation, you slaveholders will never be blamed for it" (Northup 159). Another important argument by pro-slavey authors is the image of what Nell Irvin Painter calls, in another introduction to *The Incidents*, "happy darky" (Jacobs IX). This argument has been successfully spread across America as means of improving the moral outlook of the institution and convincing Northerners that the enslaved population does not want to be freed. Pro-slavery authors claimed that "slaves were better fed, clothed, and

sheltered than free laborers in the cities of the North" (Fogel 121) and they often compared them to the poor white workers in Europe claiming slaves live far better. The accounts of atrocities and brutality in slave narratives were a great response to this argument, especially with Jacobs who also traveled to England and had seen the conditions of those European workers. She exclaimed: "I would ten thousand times rather that my children should be the half-starved paupers of Ireland than to be the most pampered among the slaves of America" (Jacobs 34).

Regarding that racist view of African Americans, the abolitionists had to also focus on "removing white anxieties about the behavior of free blacks" (Drescher 143) and make sure they understand the "mental deterioration" that is purposely inflicted on the black slaves by slaveholders. One of those attempts was made by William Lloyd Garrison, the leader of the abolitionist movement and publisher abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* which was the leading source among the very big number of "abolitionist newspapers; books, tracts, pamphlets, and magazines" (Fogel 328) that were aimed at Southern culture and morality (328). In his preface to *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass,* Garrison talks about the meeting with Douglass, his first speech, intellect, education, credibility, activity in the movement, writing ability and gives his thoughts on the enslavement of African Americans. Regarding the racist ideas of black intellectual inferiority, he not only presents Frederick Douglass and his narrative as the natural evidence against it but also brings to attention the anecdote of a white sailor stranded and enslaved in Africa who was found to be in the same state as black slaves in America (Douglass 6). The introductory chapters and prefaces of slave narratives were often given by specifically white abolitionists which has an important role in slave narratives for multiple reasons. In addition to William Lloyd Garrison, there was also a letter from another leading abolitionist by the name of Wendell Phillips who similarly praised Douglass and homed in on his writing ability, credibility, and the danger he exposed himself to as a fugitive slave (Stauffer 204).

It is apparent that the criticism of credibility and writing ability are two major criticisms by slavery advocates and defenders. In the same light, Lydia Maria Child, a white woman and an abolitionist, confirmed the credibility and writing ability of Harriet Jacobs by stating that she knows her personally and that she achieved literacy as a slave through her mistress's help and "favorable circumstances" (5). The attack on the credibility of the black authors of slave narratives was one of the major arguments by pro-slavery writers, too. They "claimed that no African American could be so articulate, and that the narratives were ghostwritten by white abolitionists" (Dickson and Bruce 34). Therefore, the slave narratives required the co-sign and confirmation of white abolitionists like Garrison and Child to have any chance of success with the white audience.

This also caused a specific problem for black authors. Once again, they were under the control of white people, only this time they were "their white political patrons and audiences" (Goldsby 17) meaning that they could not "speak freely" **(**17). This is best explained by the example of Fredrick Douglass who had an argument with Llyod Garrison and decided to publish unaffected by the movement and its directions as he was not treated as an equal within the movement (Stauffer 208-9). Douglass saw this as another form of bondage where his creative ideas were under the heavy influence of Garrison and his followers, but he was not getting the respect deserved (212). With his safety in danger as a fugitive slave and a target for slave hunters, Douglass tried to conceal the names of his masters and the people involved in the story during his speeches. His audience, which was mostly white, traditionally started doubting his experience as a slave based on his educated speech and behavior. The abolitionists responded by pressing Douglass to reveal the details by telling him "it was 'better to have a little of the plantation manner of speech than not'" (Douglass VIII). This way they intended to convince the audience of his credibility, but without much regard for their "friend" Frederick Douglass.

The white characters in slave narratives have been used as symbols of slavery or better yet, weapons against slavery. This was revealed by Frederick Douglass himself in his two later writings of "The Letter to My Old Master" in which he addressed Thomas Auld and Hugh Auld with apologetic words confirming that the treatment they gave to him personally was not accurate in his narrative, but he used them to create powerful images of slavery that would aid the abolishment of the institution. A big moment ensued in 1877, near the end of Thomas Auld's life when the two met with tears in their eyes and words of mutual respect. Frederick Douglass exclaimed in his letters: "I did not run from you, but from slavery" (qtd. in Sandquist 97) and "I love you, but I hate slavery" (qtd. in Sandquist 97). With these statements, Douglass proclaimed that the person of his master was not as important as was his personal agenda and the agenda of the movement to abolish slavery (Sandquist 97). The writing of slave narratives has been undoubtedly affected by the abolitionist agenda and their addresses to the white audience to raise awareness about slavery. That is the reason why white stereotypes in the slave narratives are created – to be the symbols of different messages or even slavery itself.

The messages sent to the North in slave narratives were simple. The brutal depictions of all misfortunes of the enslaved blacks in the South were placed with the intention of waking up moral responsibility in the Northerners with the following requests and statements to the readers: "In view of these things, why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the north?" (Jacobs 33), "Rise up, ye women that are at ease! Hear my voice, ye careless daughters! Give ear unto my

speech" (1). The images of slavery followed by direct addresses to the readers were very powerful and effective in challenging Northern passivity (Mizruchi 455). When addressing the readers, authors of slave narratives had to be careful in their approach with frequent reassuring messages of credibility to them: "I have not exaggerated the wrongs inflicted by Slavery; on the contrary, my descriptions fall far short of the facts. I have concealed the names of places and given persons fictitious names" (Jacobs 3). Another common aspect of these direct addresses to the readers is separating the white society of the South and North to make Northerners comfortable with the message: "You surely would refuse to do for the master, on your own soil, to the mean and cruel work which trained bloodhounds and the lowest class of whites do for him at the south" (31), but the North has not escaped criticism either especially regarding their institution of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850.

2. The Perspective on White America

The criticism of American society was one of the major themes in slave narratives as the society that was being portrayed was seriously infected by the "serpent of slavery" (Jacobs 69). In the nineteenth century, the slave narratives were a rare platform where, regardless of the agendas and control mentioned in the previous chapter, the criticism of White America was acceptable and present. The biggest motif in all the criticism of both the North and the South was hypocrisy. The hypocrisy was the one criticism that was applied to individual white characters, societies of both the North and South, the Church and religion, laws and supposed ideals of the US.

When looking at the criticism of generally celebrated laws and ideals agreed as the basis of the US in the Constitution of 1789, slave narrative authors used it to create powerful images of hypocrisy that attack the core of the White America of the nineteenth century. In *Twelve Years a Slave*, Solomon Northup points to this perfectly when describing the slave pen in Washington where he was held and his transport to the South: "Strange as it may seem, within plain sight of this same house, looking down from its commanding height upon it, was the Capitol. The voices of patriotic representatives boasting of freedom and equality, and the rattling of the poor slave's chains, almost commingled. A slave pen within the very shadow of the Capitol!" (Northup 21). He directly attacks the basic American ideals of "man's inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!" (30) and the government of the United States itself by exposing the hypocrisy in not putting words into practice and believing in those same values.

Another similar criticism that is present in all three analyzed slave narratives is the criticism of American law both in the North and the South. The unfairness and racist nature of American law does not even allow free black citizens to be legitimate witnesses to a crime as their evidence was considered "inadmissible" just based on their race (Douglass 189). Frederick Douglass points out that when he was beaten up by white workers on a shipyard in Baltimore, even if he "had been killed in the presence of a thousand colored people, their testimony combined would have been insufficient to have arrested one of the murderers" (Douglass 98). There was no way for a white person to get convicted based on the testimony of a black person since "by the slave code, they are adjudged to be as incompetent to testify against a white man, as though they were indeed a part of the brute creation" (9). This was how the law functioned in "the Christian city of Baltimore" (98) and in antebellum America in general.

2.1. The Perspective on the American North

Slave narrative authors were mostly unrestricted in their criticism of the American South, its society, and values while the criticism of the North had to be carefully constructed with the clear reasoning being that Northerners were their targeted audience. However, Harriet Jacobs did not only send direct messages to the Northerners regarding their acceptance of the Fugitive Slave Act, but also switched from making Southern society carry all the blame for slavery to criticizing Northerners still in support of it. The Fugitive Slave Act was strictly enforced and demanded from every free citizen of the North to be turned overnight into "a manhunter" or be prosecuted by law (Fogel 342). Jacobs made a direct comparison of the Northern and Southern white society and their involvement in the degradation of the black man by expressing their hypocrisy: "I admit that the black man is inferior. But what is it that makes him so? It is the ignorance in which white men compel him to live; it is the torturing whip that lashes manhood out of him; it is the fierce bloodhounds of the South, and the scarcely less cruel human bloodhounds of the north, who enforce the Fugitive Slave Law" (Jacobs 49). The term "bloodhound" is also very similarly used by Solomon Northup in *Twelve Years a Slave*, but he indirectly used the metaphor of a dog breed to show the difference between the North and South by stating that the "dogs used on Bayou Boeuf for hunting slaves are a kind of blood-hound, but a far more savage breed than is found in the Northern States" (Northup 80). Beside this remark, Northup does not criticize the North in any way through his whole narrative – possibly because he was born and raised as "a free citizen of New York" (19) and had many friends in the North that helped him come back home. Harriet Jacobs, on the other hand, had a more than few critiques for the "free men and women of the North" (Jacobs 33). Even when escaping the slavery of the South, Harriet Jacobs (Linda Brent) experienced and documented many incidents of racism and oppression in the North. The racist incidents of being forbidden to eat at the same table as white people, to ride in the front of first-class cars, to sleep in the cabins of steamboats, or just simply to be in certain areas are mentioned in the narrative. These incidents sometimes trigger the feeling of great disappointment in the author and the protagonist: "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, which so discourages the feelings, and represses the energies of the colored people" (196). Other times, it incites the feeling of extreme anger in her: "This was the climax! I found it hard to preserve my self-control, when I looked round, and saw women who were nurses, as I was, and only one shade lighter in complexion, eyeing me with a defiant look, as

if my presence were a contamination" (196). Harriet Jacobs denied the stereotypical superiority of the Northern man and expressed the hypocrisy that he hides by claiming that some Northerners come to the South and fully embrace the system of slavery while even "going beyond their teachers" (49) and becoming very harsh in their treatment of slaves. She strongly states how other slaves and herself feel about this type of Northerners by saying that "even the slaves despise a northern man with southern principles" (49).

The fact is, Jacobs incorporated the most criticism of the North in her narrative out of the three primarily analyzed authors focusing especially on the hypocrisy of its society and the disappointment it brought her. Like in *Twelve Years a Slave*, the critique of the Northern society is rare in *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass*. The one criticism that may be pointed out is the "prejudice against color, among the white calkers (Douglass 113)" which prevented Douglass to get employment as a calker in the North. Even with that, Douglass in the appendix below expands on it to prove how it already got fixed by expressing: "I am told that colored persons can now get employment at calking in New Bedford—a result of anti-slavery effort" (Douglass 113).

Other than these few messages and statements about the North, the depiction of the North and the society of the North is mainly positive in both *Twelve Years a Slave* and *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass* thanks to it still being the "land of freedom" (94). To illustrate, Solomon Northup was a born free northerner himself and on multiple occasions referred to it as the "land of freedom" (Northup 139) while depicting how a black person in the Northern states can be "leading a happy and prosperous life" (10) and gain many trustworthy friends like Henry B. Northup, Cephas Parker, William Perry, and others. Frederick Douglass describes his first impression of the North after his escape from slavery in a very positive way. He is mostly shocked by three things he encounters there. The first one is the quietness of the North, meaning how orderly and peaceful it is as "there were no black loud songs heard from those engaged in loading and unloading ships. I heard no deep oaths or horrid curses on the laborer. I saw no whipping of men…" (Douglass XX). Secondly, he could not believe how rich and prosperous the life of Northerners is even though they do not hold slaves. He describes it as being "surrounded with the strongest proofs of wealth" (111). The third thing that impressed him the most is the "condition of the colored people" (112) who were also "enjoying more of the comforts of life, than the average of slaveholders in Maryland" (112). That is how the slave narratives saw the white society of the North.

2.2. The Perspective on the American South

The differences in the discourse between the two regions were apparent as were efforts to contest the Southern arguments and attract more Northern supporters for the movement (Mulvey 33). As far as any positive depictions of the Southern society in slave narratives, there are very few of importance. Anything that provides a distraction and relief from the everyday struggle and "the hell of slavery" (Douglass 19) is seen as a positive for the slaves. Usually, that relief is provided by the random acts of kindness from individual white characters that stand out from the rest of the society and maybe suggest that there is a chance for the South to exit the darkness of racism and slavery. One of those characters is a young mistress by the name of Mary McCoy who "is beloved by all her slaves" (Northup 170) and famous for organizing large Christmas feasts for the slaves and showing extreme kindness to them (170). As far as the positive experiences go, the only ones addressed by the slaves are related to Christmas, specifically, as Northup describes it as "the time of feasting, and frolicking, and fiddling – the carnival season with the children of bondage" (126).

Even though acknowledged positively in the narratives, the experience of holidays is still criticized by both Jacobs and Douglass. Former expresses how even those days are "laden with peculiar sorrows" (Jacobs 18) as the hiring day is right on New Year´s Day and a lot of black families get broken up. The latter, however, criticizes the intentions behind the organization of holiday festivities for the slaves as they are "the most effective means in the hands of the slaveholder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection" (Douglass 79). Other specific circumstances that provide relief to the slaves are mentioned like the fact that even slaveholders have a sense of shame and concern for their reputation which alone makes the Southern society (at least on the surface) aware of the moral depravity of their actions. Their "sadistic impulses were frequently restrained by the fear of public disapproval" (Blassingame 268). Therefore, in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet expresses how fortunate she was to live in a small town "where all the inhabitants knew each other" (Jacobs 38). Although that might even further show how corrupted the Southern white society is when it is only important that the atrocities of slavery happen behind closed doors. Similarly, Douglass expresses the difference between living on a plantation and living in a city as a slave by pointing to the strict care for reputation in a Southern town: "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" (Douglass 45). This

provides the readers with an insight into the different settings of the South and portrays something other than the usual image of plantation slavery.

The image of the slaveholding South is predominately negative in slave narratives. In theory and practice, slavery became one of the basic Southern values on its own. It was the basic part of their everyday lives and a natural situation. The way slaveholders casually discussed the slave market, observed human beings as chattel, and saw them as just a "piece of property" (Jacobs 12) shows "the state of society existing there" (Northup 120). In those circumstances, white children were born and raised in, and it was understandable why even the kindest of white people in the South saw the institution of slavery on its own as natural and proper. Slavery had a great impact on the moral decay of the Southern white society whose values were deformed and adjusted to the circumstances. The criticism expressed of that society though goes in multiple directions. One of the most coveted ones is the array of brutality and violence that it contains which is best explained by Solomon Northup himself when describing a few of many incidents of violence he witnessed while in the South from murders of slaves that were considered chattel to murders of other white gentlemen just based on disagreements. Northup makes a short comparison in regard of law and order between the North and South claiming that violent events that "pass without notice" (Northup 121) in the South would be harshly condemned in the North. He describes the outlook of the South in this regard as following: "Every man carries his bowie knife, and when two fall out, they set to work hacking and thrusting at each other, more like savages than civilized and enlightened beings" (121). Similarly, Frederick Douglass describes the violent scenes he witnessed or heard while in the South such as the murders of slaves by overseers and slave masters that were completely "cool and collected" (Douglass 35) about it. Killing a slave, Douglass claims, "in Talbot county, Maryland, is not treated as a crime, either by the courts or the community" (36). The Southern society felt little to no emotion towards violence anymore as "beating, branding, and maiming" (Fogel 327) their slaves "at the slightest provocation and often without any provocation at all" (327) made them numb to violence. It infected the entire society so much that "among the most distinguished governors of slave states, among their most celebrated judges, senators, and representatives in Congress, there is hardly one, who has not either killed, or tried to kill, or aided and abetted his friends in trying to kill, one or more individuals" (327).

Another often criticized aspect of the Southern society is that it was as George Bourne called it "an erotic society" (qtd. in Fogel 328) which knew no boundaries for sexual gratification, especially of white men corrupted by the control and power they had in the society. The vices like drinking and prostitution were a much bigger problem in the South than in the North considering

once again the limitations for it were non-existent. Extramarital sex was always available to the slaveholders and their lust for black women destroyed their own families. Such was the situation that Bourne states: "So rampant was dissolution that the southern states had become 'one great Sodom,' so deep was the depravity that by comparison 'a Turkish harem' was 'a cradle of virgin purity'" (qtd. in Fogel 328).

It was also very apparent that the Southern society built everything around the system of slavery with not just strict laws mainly focused on the limitation of the black race, but also societal codes that as Southerners they tried to oblige. Most of the official laws were focused on limiting slaves' movement and preventing their escape. Therefore, the "hyper-surveillance" of black slaves was occupying their time and attention since the law empowered every white citizen of the South, regardless of age, gender, or social background to stop a black person and if they did not obey them, they could be forced to (Jones-Rogers 105). As Northup explains it: "A slave caught off his master's plantation without a pass, may be seized and whipped by any white man whom he meets" (Northup 93). Along with that, there were unofficial social codes of slavery that were in place to keep slaves docile and uneducated which is why William Ford was described by other white men coming to his plantation as "not fit to own a nigger" (qtd. in Northup 56) since his slaves, specifically, Sam, was allowed to read the Bible. An offense that Jacobs claims "slaves were whipped and imprisoned for" (Jacobs 81) while the masters teaching them were frowned upon. A lot of the times even if slaveholders were kind and did not require that high level of docility from their slaves when visited by other whites they appeared to be harder masters than usually just for the sake of their reputation of not being friendly to the slaves (Blassingame 308). Since the economy of the South, their laws, traditions, morals, behavior, and everyday life revolved around their control and co-existence with black slaves, writer and literary critic Ralph Ellison stated that "Southern whites cannot walk, talk, sing, conceive of laws or justice, think of sex, love, the family or freedom without responding to the presence of the Negroes" (qtd. in Blassingame 49). The flaws of the South as a society were used by the abolitionists who in their newspapers and magazines focused on its degradation and how the institution of slavery affected not only black community but also the white one.

3. The Effects of Slavery on the White Character

Besides the previously mentioned effects of slavery and white supremacy on the white society of the South, the slave narratives also exhibit the effects of it on individual white characters whose behavior, actions, and potentially views change under its influence. The authors of slave narratives use certain white characters and specific situations as embodiments or symbols of the effects of slavery for the readers to recognize. In addition to the already mentioned numbness to violence and the decay of white family, there is also the degradation of white womanhood and interracial mistrust.

In all three of the primarily analyzed slave narratives, there was a clear intention to show the physical brutality of slavery and therefore create a powerful shocking image that could horrify the readers in the North. When reading slave narratives, it is not hard to recognize the effects slavery had on the black slave, but it is impossible for anybody but them to fully comprehend them. The same could also be said about the white people involved. Slave narrative authors make it known to the reader that every action of physical or mental violence and oppression goes consequentially in two directions – toward the black slave and towards the white oppressor. Therefore, when a black slave was frequently lashed, abused and drained of "every ounce of manhood, of resistance, of self-respect, and of independence" (Blassingame 296) in an attempt to be "broken in" (Douglass 70), the ones that ended up broken are both the black slave and the white master that does the breaking. As Douglass exclaims after he has been "broken in body, soul and spirit" (70) by the "Negro breaker" Covey: "behold a man transformed into a brute!" (70). The term "brute" was used on many occasions in reference to the black slave whom the slaveholders tried to make into one and lose "all feeling of independence, self-respect, sympathy for others" (Blassingame 293). Northup, however, used the term in reference to a white slave trader James Burch while pointing out his numbness for violence as well: "I prayed for mercy, but my prayer was only answered with imprecations and with stripes. I thought I must die beneath the lashes of the accursed brute" (Northup 23). While trying to form a "brute" out of a black slave, the white oppressor became one himself. It was already explained how the violence occurred in the South and how the Southern society perceived violence without any strong emotion. Northup explains that, what specifically caused the white people in the South to be numb to violence were the "daily witnesses of human suffering" (121). His explanation was that being surrounded by certain images and sounds of slavery eventually leads a human to become numb to those same images and sounds

as he claimed “listening to the agonizing screeches of the slave – beholding him writhing beneath the merciless lash – bitten and torn by dogs – dying without attention, and buried without shroud or coffin – it cannot otherwise be expected, than that they should become brutified and reckless of human life” (121).

There are many notions expressed about the decay of the white family which was “one of the most important institutions which influenced the planter’s treatment of the slave” (Blassingame 265). Therefore, the images portrayed of the Southern family are often the instability and tension usually combined with other negatives around it such as the cruelty, violence, and lust of the slave master that results in his familial issues as well. The extramarital relations with black women, whether consensual or not, posed great problems in the white family with the white wife either silently having “to accept patriarchy and put up with their husbands' adultery in the slave quarters” (Zafar 3) or direct their jealousy and anger towards the female slave which then led to the decay of her own character and womanhood. With her address to the Northerners, Jacobs exposes the reality of many white families in the South that awaits all young girls that marry Southern slaveholders:

> The poor girls have romantic notions of a sunny clime, and of the flowering vines that all the year round shade a happy home. To what disappointments are they destined! The young wife soon learns that the husband in whose hands she has placed her happiness pays no regard to his marriage vows. Children of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies, and too well she knows that they are born unto him of his own household. Jealousy and hatred enter the flowery home, and it is ravaged of its loveliness. (Jacobs 39)

The “sexual advances” of white men toward black female slaves were not controllable and represented “the most serious impediments to the development of morality” (Blassingame 154). White families all over the South were living in a situation of great patriarchal unhappiness where “the slave had been raped, and the mistress had to survive by clinging to the delusion” (Carby 31) that the family is still intact. The denial of white wives that specifically their husbands were not involved in the miscegenation was sometimes very ironic: “Any lady is ready to tell you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but her own. Those, she seems to think, drop from the clouds” (Carby 31). It was not rare that their husbands would even go a step further and have a black concubine that they even loved more than their wife (Blassingame 155). One of those examples is depicted in *Twelve Years a Slave* where Eliza lives with a white man Elisha Berry who separated from his wife and had a child with Eliza (Northup 27). This only

further perpetuated and extended family's jealousy and hatred for Eliza who was finally sold into slavery. A lot of white women consequently lost the essence of their womanhood, turning violent, especially towards the female slave (Blassingame 156). Although Harriet Jacobs is the author that had the most to say about the specific topic of family and womanhood, all authors agreed that "slavery impedes the family relation, not promoting but obstructing and subverting it at every turn" (Gibson 158).

When it comes to the idea of womanhood, there is a huge difference in the perception of black and white one. A black woman did not fit any form of the definition of womanhood. She "repeatedly failed the test of true womanhood because she survived her institutionalized rape, whereas the true heroine would rather die than be sexually abused" (Carby 34). A hypocritical stance considering white women of the time would sometimes have sexual relations with their slaves and then if needed blame them for rape which would be readily accepted by the white men of the community since "black men (like black women) were seen as inherently lustful and prone to sexual vice" ("Sexual relations between"). That is another effect of slavery that white slaveholding fathers did not expect as their daughters, affected by the images and sounds of their father´s sexual abuse of female slaves, were enticed to "exercise the same authority over the men slaves" (Zafar 3). That kind of relationship was obviously frowned upon with women involved facing "varying degrees of public humiliation" ("Sexual relations between") whereas if they became pregnant, the solution would either be infanticide or selling the child into slavery ("Sexual relations between"). Harriet Jacobs reports on the same event in *The Incidents* as a daughter of one white planter chose the slave who was "most brutalized, over whom her authority could be exercised with less fear of exposure" (Jacobs 58) and in addition to that gave "him free papers and sent him out of the state" (58) before her father managed to get revenge (58).

The definition of womanhood applied only to white women, and it represented a set of values that Southern society believed a true woman should possess. This concept of "true womanhood" had its origins in Victorian society and was applied exclusively to white women in the South who were considered "pure, chaste, angelic and pious upholders of moral values" (Zafar 2). On the other hand, "black women were stereotyped as promiscuous and overtly sexual in nature, suffering from moral corruption" (2). Sometimes they did not live according to those values, but the Southern pride and attention to public reputation could not allow it to ever be questioned. This cult of "true womanhood" represented "four cardinal virtues - piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Carby 23) that the society would judge a woman on, and if she

had them "she was promised happiness and power" (23) according to the feminist historian Barbara Welter.

The one thing that was prevalent in regard to white womanhood was the focus on the sensibility and compassion of white women which was even expressed in the form of resentment of the brutality of slavery as it made the white women "faint and seasick" (Carby 28) to see some of the atrocities. In that sense, when describing his mistress Sophia Auld Frederick Douglass states that she was "a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. . . Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music" (Douglass 43). The usage of the words "finest feelings" clearly focused on the sensibility of that white woman that separated her from others and made her in a way superior as a woman (Carby 28). On the other hand, Jacobs reveals the fraudulency and true nature of that behavior when describing her mistress Flint who "apparently fits perfectly in the "cult of true womanhood" by being delicate and "totally deficient in energy" (Jacobs 14), but in reality, she is an active factor in the oppression who "could sit in an easy chair and see a woman whipped, till the blood trickled from every stroke of the lash" (14). Harriet Jacobs concluded after narrating the incident of one young white woman who was very kind, but unhappy in her marriage that: "Had it not been for slavery, he would have been a better man, and his wife a happier Woman" (57).

With drinking, torturing, murdering, and raping, the problem of simply lying and deceiving does not even seem important, but it was also one of the things that influenced the white society and even the slaves who had to employ fraudulent tactics to survive. Another thing that slavery caused in the Southern society and the relationship between the two races, was the sense of interracial mistrust that remained a part of American society for a long time even after the abolishment of slavery. There was a mutual fear between the two groups. The slaves feared the white man because he was usually not only their oppressor but also the "most deadly enemy" (Blassingame 200) when it comes to escaping slavery and achieving freedom. The slaves viewed "all whites as enemies, his master as a tyrant, and himself as being without protection before the law" (315). This is very well portrayed in slave narratives as black protagonist often expresses great mistrust of white characters. That was one of the most problematic things since all slaves had to rely on white people to help them achieve freedom. The question was always what white people are worthy of the trust and what happens if they betray them. In a way, white characters were under observation by the black characters to see if they are trustworthy and based on that, their portrayal of the character was susceptible to change.

In all three primarily analyzed slave narratives there was an example of this mistrust. Solomon Northup narrates the story of his kidnapping where he was most likely betrayed and conned by two white men to whom he "gave confidence without reserve" (Northup 16) based on their approach to him. Right after that betrayal, Northup experienced heavy beatings at the hand of white slave trader James Burch which then pushed him to make a strong exclamation that many other slaves would admit to: "A human face was fearful to me, especially a white one" (23). Violence combined with betrayal certainly explains this kind of a mindset. Being born and raised as a freeman in the North, Northup formed relationships with white people that proved to be trustworthy, which might explain why he repeatedly turned to them for help even in captivity. The trust Northup demanded of white characters like the sailor John Manning, Armsby, and Bass was simply to send his letters to the North where he can legally obtain his freedom with the help of his friends. The difficult attempts to achieve freedom by simply running away was a whole other thing and this is where the most usual explanations of the mistrust happen. Northup explains these attempts as most perilous by stating:

> No man who has never been placed in such a situation, can comprehend the thousand obstacles thrown in the way of the flying slave. Every white man's hand is raised against him – the patrollers are watching for him – the hounds are ready to follow on his track, and the nature of the country is such as renders it impossible to pass through it with any safety. (Northup 142)

One of those very important things that influenced the mistrust was the danger white people posed to slave's chance for an escape from slavery. Noticing a slave and catching him or alarming the patrollers who were always on the lookout for fugitive slaves was something that every white person had the power to do. Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs had even more reservations about white people in their narratives as they carried the status of fugitives. Douglass, therefore, stated that even after escaping and becoming a fugitive he saw "in every white man an enemy" (Douglass 107). Jacobs lists several reasons for mistrust towards white people with one of those even being her master not repaying back the money her grandmother gave to her mistress and even being on to the auction after long years of service for the family (Jacobs 26). The slaves often masked their true feelings when interacting with white people to escape possible issues or hardships. They had to hide their anger well from their masters (Blassingame 314-5) and they would often play a part that would convince the whites of their humility and docility (313-4). Also, they were forced to use all their experience and knowledge to survive slavery, and even more to escape it. As a former slaveholder Edward A. Pollard wrote in 1871: "It is astonishing how little

the slaveholders of the South, despite their supposed knowledge know of the negro…" (qtd. in Blassingame 313) which is one of the reasons why white people feared the slaves, too. They knew that the way they were using different tactics to keep them inferior, some slaves were using tactics to plot the escape or even, revolt. Slave revolts that occurred like the one in 1712 in New York when slaves set out "to burn the town, to destroy all whites" (Blassingame 216), or the most famous revolt of Nat Turner in 1831 which deeply affected the slaveholders all over the South as it exposed the danger if their slaves were not fully under their control. Nat even supposedly had "a kind master" and still went through the plantations across Southampton killing whites including a woman by the name of Margaret Whitehead (219). Harriet Jacobs made the reference to the Nat Turner slave revolt and exposed the mistrust whites had of black slaves after that event. She also pointed out once again the hypocrisy of their fear: "Not far from this time Nat Turner's insurrection' broke out; and the news threw our town into great commotion. Strange that they should be alarmed when their slaves were so 'contented and happy'" (Jacobs 70). The feeling of mistrust heavily influenced the relationships between the white and black characters in slave narratives. It also influenced their portrayal since many had to prove that they are trustworthy as "white allies," not only to the protagonist, but also to the reader.

4. White Stereotypes

The stereotypes of white characters in slave narratives are reliant on one specific criterion. All three black protagonists of the analyzed slave narratives strived for only one thing and that is freedom. The black author's criteria for judging the white characters was very simple. Since the main theme of every slave narrative is the journey from slavery to freedom, the white character's involvement and impact on that journey will be examined by answering the three questions: do they obstruct the achievement of freedom; do they intentionally help them achieve freedom, or are they just a passive part of the system?

It was believed and portrayed that the slaves did not understand the meaning of freedom, but as Northup writes "it is a mistaken opinion" (Northup 154). The huge importance of achieving freedom and escaping slavery was commented upon in abundance by the authors of slave narratives. Frederick Douglass writes about his almost obsession with freedom: "It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness" (Douglass 51). Northup also exclaimed an "ardent desire to escape from slavery to a free State" (Northup 116) while Jacobs expresses her gratitude to Mrs. Bruce who "bestowed the inestimable boon of freedom on me and my children" (Jacobs 225). The fact of the matter is that they all needed help from white characters to achieve that freedom. Based on that criterion, the white characters in slave narratives can be divided into three stereotypes – "the white devil," "the kind white folks," and "the white ally." Their relationship and treatment of the black protagonist are what impacted their overall representation the most. The one common thing that can be noticed in all three slave narratives is that white characters with their mental state, actions, and behavior are usually used as symbols. Sometimes these symbols simply represented the cruelty of slavery without further explanation, and sometimes, more specific effects or circumstances resulted in changes in their character.

The white characters mentioned in the selected slave narratives are spread over different facets of the society, both Northern and Southern, based on their social status, gender, and age. It is also important to note that some characters might belong to two stereotypes at different points in the slave narratives based on the changes that happened in their character, usually because of the effects of slavery. The final important factor in placing a white character under a certain stereotype was making the comparison between characters, based on their actions and the treatment of the slaves, some being kind and the other cruel.

4.1. "The White Devil"

The "white devil" stereotype refers to white characters that are a part of the system of slavery and active culprits of different cruelties mentioned to go hand in hand with slavery. They are, most importantly, characters that try to obstruct the protagonist's freedom or prevent his/her escape. The "white devil" character is the perpetrator of oppression. He is portrayed as inherently cruel and evil, but more importantly, used as a symbol of slavery and oppression with no moments of kindness attached to them.

The exact term "devil" is used many times throughout the slave narratives in reference to the characters that are portrayed as such. For instance, witnessing his master Epps whip a slave girl Patsey until her back were "terribly lacerated" (Northup 153), Solomon Northup thought: "'Thou devil, sooner or later, somewhere in the course of eternal justice, thou shalt answer for this sin!'" (153). Harriet Jacobs uses the same term for Dr Flint many times as she hides because "the devil himself was on patrol" (Jacobs 126). Douglass also uses the term and calls the slave traders sons of the Devil (Douglass 93). Nineteenth century abolitionists used similar terms like "hell," "Sodom," "demon," and "fiend" to describe the South or Southern whites. They compared the South to "a modern-day Sodom" (Haynes 66). Most of the slaveholders, overseers, slave traders, mistresses, even clergymen, and poor whites can be categorized as the "white devil" stereotype since most descriptions in slave narratives are given of those "most dreaded" (Douglass 34) white characters. In addition to those characters there is always and an obligatory major positive white character that serves as a foil character of the main antagonist(s) of the narrative. In that way, the balance and a sense of objectivity is established, but the cruel and wicked characters are numerically a far more regular occurrence especially since the authors of all three primarily observed slave narratives retell short incidents of oppressive characters that they encountered or heard about while enslaved. While the main plot is being narrated, Frederick Douglass recounts a story of brutal violence done by the wife of Mr. Giles Hick who killed a young slave girl by beating her with a stick and suffering no consequences (Douglass 36).

The symbol of the "devil" and other similar terms are usually used by authors when describing some acts of violence, mental or physical, that were committed by a white person or the white community. In *Twelve Years a Slave,* different acts of violence bring up the usage of these terms as Solomon calls Burch "the incarnate devil" (Northup 22) and Epps's brutal beating "a demoniac exhibition" (152). Frederick Douglas in *The Narrative* called the witnessing of his

aunt Hester's brutal whipping "the entrance to the hell of slavery" (Douglass 19). Therefore, the violence portrayed in the narratives is clearly equated with demonic imagery.

Another set of terms used in a similar fashion to address cruel white characters are "snakes," "serpents," "reptiles." Authors use this term when depicting immediate danger or betrayal from the white characters or community. This term also puts an emphasis on the effects of slavery that makes white people "snakes" which is known to be a symbol of evil and treachery. For example, Douglass referred to his master, Edward Covey, as "the snake" (68) because of his cruelty and deceitful ways. Northup as well makes a strong notion of the snakes and "poisonous serpents" (Northup 82) when narrating his attempt of escaping the cruelty of Tibeats through the swamp. Even though the existence of many reptiles in the swamp is not difficult to understand in literal terms, it still is worth mentioning that the symbols of snakes, reptiles, and serpents usually expressed the fear of the white man who "was, by far, the runaway's most deadly enemy" (Blassingame 200) when attempting to escape slavery. To illustrate, Harriet Jacobs describes her escape: "As the light increased, I saw snake after snake crawling round us. I had been accustomed to the sight of snakes all my life, but these were larger than any I had ever seen. To this day I shudder when I remember that morning" (Jacobs 126). Abolitionists promoted the usage of these symbols of evil to portray the Southerners in correlation with Biblical symbols of evil that every Christian understood. When Jacobs calls Dr. Flint "the venomous old reprobate" (85) it symbolizes this type of the white character. Poisoned by the system, they spread the poison to both slaves and their own families (Titus 208).

In *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, the main antagonists are cruel slaveholders. Those that are portrayed as the "white devil" stereotypes are here most noticeably Captain Anthony, Thomas Auld, Colonel Llyod, and Edward Covey. Captain Anthony, Douglass's first master and a supposed father, may have been the cause of the greatest traumas in his life. Even though he gave it little attention in *The Narrative,* the notion that Anthony was his father troubled Douglass as he criticized the familial ties between masters and slaves and expressed a lot of anger for the white fathers of enslaved African Americans in the South (Sandquist 96). He explains the corrupted ways of a white slaveholder who often "sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and father" (Douglass 17). The scenes of Anthony brutally whipping his aunt Hester first introduced Douglass to the reality of slavery. He gives the reader a vivid recollection of the incident he witnessed with strong statements about the corruption of Anthony's character:

> He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. (Douglass 19)

It was one of those simplistic portrayals of the white character as nothing but corrupt and cruel which right from the beginning of the narrative shocks the reader with the violence of slavery. Particularly, in Thomas Auld's character he found nothing of value: "Bad as all slaveholders are, we seldom meet one destitute of every element of character commanding respect. My master was one of this rare sort. I do not know of one single noble act ever performed by him. The leading trait in his character was meanness…" (61). Along with notions that he was a "mean master" who did not even provide his slaves with "neither coarse nor fine food" (Douglass 61), he still gives an insight into other aspects of Thomas Auld's life and character. Douglass states how "Auld was not born a slaveholder" and had been "born a poor man" who acquired his slave only through marriage (61) and talks about his other characteristics calling him "cruel, but cowardly" (62). The notion that he only acquired his slaves through marriage is then used by Douglass to explain how Auld was not even a good slave master as he "commanded without firmness" (61) and "was not even a good imitator" (62) of one. Douglass described him as a slaveholder who was trying to fit in but was awkward and inconsistent which ironically made him even more hated by the slaves (62).

Along with Thomas Auld, another character whose cruelty is stated with a deeper insight into his motivations is Edward Covey. The importance of his own reputation as a "nigger-breaker" (65) provided Douglass with a chance to escape the usual everyday cruelty once he confronted him. Covey's social status was relied upon his reputation, if Douglass was not behaving well, it would reflect negatively to his reputation (79). Douglass uses Thomas Auld and Edward Covey to emphasize how the white men that were not born as slaveholders, but rather poor, became extremely corrupted by power. As far as Colonel Llyod goes, only his generational riches and cruelty are of importance in the narrative. Neither of them treated the black protagonist in any way other than cruelty. Thomas Auld's brother Hugh is not considered the "white devil" since he shows kindness with few mentions of his inhumanity and greed: "I found him very angry; he could scarce restrain his wrath. He said he had a great mind to give me a severe whipping…He raved and swore his determination to get hold of me" (104-5).

The stereotype of the "white devil" is almost unavoidable for the men in the position of overseer on the plantation. As an overseer, a white man had to excel at managing slaves meaning that he had to find balance between the cruel punishment of the slaves and not damaging the slaveholder´s property. Namely, managing to get the slaves to work diligently without much punishment was considered good management (Blassingame 244). Still, in slave narratives, overseers are mostly portrayed as barbaric. Sometimes even the names of the overseers best represented their only feature, as in the case of Mr. Severe and Mr. Gore in *The Narrative* (Douglass XIII). "Savage barbarity" (35) is a succinct image depicting their control over the slaves.

Along with the visual and auditory images of violence and the usage of cruel slaveholders and overseers as weapons to expose the institution of slavery, there are other institutions that were heavily criticized. The Southern Church is a clear target of criticism in most of the slave narratives. Rev. Daniel Weeden and Rev. Rigby Hopkins, slaveholders and ministers in the Reformist Methodist Church, are characters that could be designated as the "white devil" stereotypes and have a purpose of exposing the hypocrisy of the Southern Church. Frederick Douglass right after placing them in high rankings of the Church points out the extreme cruelty with which they treated their slaves: "Mr. Weeden owned, among others, a woman slave, whose name I have forgotten. This woman's back, for weeks, was kept literally raw, made so by the lash of this merciless, religious wretch" (82). In addition to them, the criticism of the hypocritical piousness and the Church was expressed in the characters of slaveholders like Thomas Auld with notions from Douglass that getting closer to the Church "made him more cruel and hateful in all his ways" (62). Slave traders and slave hunters Douglass only mentioned as whole groups and portrayed as "devils" who "after taunting us in various ways, they one by one went into an examination of us, with intent to ascertain our value" (93). Those two groups he also depicted as only interested in the financial gain from slavery to the point that they are not even humans (93).

As far as mistresses are concerned there are no major complete "white devil" stereotypical characters, but there are mentions of Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Hick in short incidents retold in the narrative. Mrs. Hick was already mentioned for her act of killing a slave girl in a gruesome fashion, while Mrs. Hamilton is used as an example of a city slaveholder that does not even care about the public reputation as others do. Mrs. Hamilton would "sit in a large chair in the middle of the room, with a heavy cowskin always by her side, and scarce an hour passed during the day but was marked by the blood of one of these slaves" (46). More important mistress in the narrative was Sophia Auld who was predominantly portrayed for her kindness, however, she gradually turned into the

white devil: “She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself” (48).

The only poor white characters in the narrative are the white carpenters Douglass meets when working in a shipyard. They are also categorized as “devils” because of their racist views and attacks on Douglass. The fact that white carpenters do not mind working with black colleagues at first and then suddenly change their views is what Douglass pointed out. Douglass also insinuated here that poor white people’s character changes under the ideas promoted to them by possible outside sources: “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” (96).

In *Twelve Years a Slave,* the “white devil” characters are spread out in different facets of the Southern society too. Their portrayal and criticism were again done in the same pattern. The most notable, cruel, and antagonistic slaveholder in *Twelve Years a Slave* is Edwin Epps on whose plantation Solomon Northup spent the most time on. He is firmly an embodiment of the “white devil” stereotype in *Twelve Years a Slave.* The author provides the reader with Epps’s background, rise in society, vices, habits, lack of morale, and other different characteristics:

> He has blue eyes, a fair complexion, and is, as I should say, full six feet high. He has the sharp, inquisitive expression of a jockey. His manners are repulsive and coarse, and his language gives speedy and unequivocal evidence that he has never enjoyed the advantages of an education…When ‘in his cups’, Master Epps was a roystering, blustering, noisy fellow, whose chief delight was in dancing with his ‘niggers’, or lashing them about the yard with his long whip, just for the pleasure of hearing them screech and scream, as the great welts were planted on their backs. When sober, he was silent, reserved and cunning, not beating us indiscriminately, as in his drunken moments, but sending the end of his rawhide to some tender spot of a lagging slave, with a sly dexterity peculiar to himself. He had been a driver and overseer in his younger years, but at this time was in possession of a plantation on Bayou Huff Power. (Northup 96)

This is a detailed description of a white character that goes far above the simplistic image of a cruel master as it gives a deeper insight into his character and mentality, emphasizing many different and already mentioned effects of slavery. He is also one of the characters that is involved in the decay of his family with his sexual interest in the slave girl Patsey. Epps’s treatment of the

protagonist Solomon is no different than his other slaves: “Ten years I was compelled to address him with downcast eyes and uncovered head – in the attitude and language of a slave” (108).

Other such slaveholders are only mentioned in those short episodes that Northup retells to the readers or are just characters Solomon met along the way. Slaveholders like Peter Tanner, Jacob Brooks, Jim Burns, and Mr. Marshall are usually used as symbols, too. A lot of these were already mentioned in the paper related to different acts of oppression they committed – from Jacobs Brooks selling Eliza to slavery, Jim Burns whipping his female slaves to Mr. Marshall killing a fellow white man in cold blood. Along these, there is Peter Tanner as an example of criticism of the piousness of Southern slaveholders. One of those slaveholders that read the Bible to their slaves in a way that brainwashed them into thinking the punishment they received was acceptable: “That nigger that don’t take care – that don’t obey his lord – that’s his master – d’ye see? – that ’ere nigger shall be beaten with many stripes. Now, “many” signifies a great many – forty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty lashes. That’s Scripter!’” (Northup 75). Interestingly, there is no direct criticism of clergymen or the Southern Church by Solomon Northup as there is in the other two slave narratives, only this attack on the slaveholder’s faith.

John Tibeats is a carpenter and a slaveholder at the same time since he became Solomon’s master once his old master Ford could not repay his debt. Northup immediately states that Tibeats is an exact opposite of his kind master William Ford by also digging deeper into his character and social status: “He was without standing in the community, not esteemed by white men, nor even respected by slaves. He was ignorant, withal, and of a revengeful disposition” (59). As far as Tibeats’s treatment of Solomon he states: “I was his faithful slave, and earned him large wages every day, and yet I went to my cabin nightly, loaded with abuse and stinging epithets” (62). The “two gentlemen of respectable appearance” (16) that turned out to be the slave kidnappers Merrill Brown and Abram Hamilton are for Northup simply an embodiment of treachery and betrayal. He describes their appearance and manners, but for Northup, although not completely certain of their guilt, they are simply “subtle and inhuman monsters in the shape of men” (16). They are the symbol of the effects of slavery on interracial mistrust because these kinds of slave kidnappers and slave hunters were a major factor in every slave´s and even free black person’s life. Their treachery and willingness to betray any black person “for the sake of gold” (16) made black protagonists in all slave narratives insecure and fearful.

Solomon Northup’s first conscious contact with the “white devil” character is with the slave trader James Burch whose cruelty was already described in the paper. Northup’s portrayal

of Burch remains consistent throughout the narrative: “His face was full, his complexion flush, his features grossly coarse, expressive of nothing but cruelty and cunning. He was about five feet ten inches high, of full habit, and, without prejudice, I must be allowed to say, was a man whose whole appearance was sinister and repugnant” (20). Burch’s actions like Epps’s, matched their physical appearance with no further development of the character. The whole class of slave traders and kidnappers was, similarly as in Frederick Douglass’s narrative, heavily detested and portrayed in the form of the “white devil” stereotype with no more than a few specific negative characteristics awarded to them.

Other slave traders mentioned like Theophilus Freeman and Mr. Goodin are all no more than “speculators in human flesh” (35). They were all simply detrimental to the black protagonist and exemplary of the stereotype. As far as poor white characters go, there are two that contain the characteristics of the “white devil.” These are Ebenezer Radburn and Armsby. The former was “a simple lackey” (22) for Burch who helped him in all his cruelties while getting “two shillings a head per day” (22) and still trying to upkeep morality by giving advice to Solomon (23). The latter was, even more, two-faced and treacherous. Armsby was a “white man working in the field” (136-7) which made him even “the object of ridicule, pity, and scorn” (Blassingame 306) by the slaves. Solomon once again had faith in a white man who again betrayed him, which only further empowered the mistrust effect of slavery.

As in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, mistresses in *Twelve Years a Slave*, are not portrayed as completely cruel or with characteristics of the “white devil.” The indication given is either that they were generally kind or that under the influence of slavery they changed their nature. However, there are parts where white women are shown as the “white devil.” That can be seen in the example of Mistress Epps and her cruel actions towards Patsey: “…if she was not watchful when about her cabin, or when walking in the yard, a billet of wood, or a broken bottle perhaps, hurled from her mistress’ hand, would smite her unexpectedly in the face” (Northup 112). Her moments of belonging to the “white devil” stereotype are more emphasized than her kind ones and are all related to Patsey since “the jealousy and hatred” (151) towards her was her main motivation. It reached a point where “to be rid of Patsey – to place her beyond sight or reach, by sale, or death, or in any other manner, of late years, seemed to be the ruling thought and passion of my mistress” (117). Along with those mentions of cruelty though, there were positive depictions of her that put her in the “kind white folks” stereotype which will be explained later in the paper. It can be seen, however, that the male slave narrators like Douglass and Northup were more favorable in their portrayal of white women merely because they had less contact to them. Hence,

the testimony of the female slave narrator could give a better outlook on the white mistresses of Southern society.

The main antagonists in *The Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* are Mr. and Mrs. Flint who, although differently motivated, are primarily concerned with keeping the black protagonist Linda Brent (Harriet Jacobs) enslaved. The cruelties they commit are of a much lesser physical degree than some of the white characters in the other two slave narratives, but still, the psychological degradation of the black protagonist is very impactful. When portraying Dr. Flint, Jacobs is very deliberate and consistent in not providing him with any compliments or positive characteristics. Although there is some information about his social status and background as a slaveholder and a physician in the town, there are no explanations for his cruelty except his own nature. Any of his attempts to be kind or helpful toward Harriet are explained as deceitful attempts to get what he wants. This first expression of emotions of the protagonist towards the antagonist Dr. Flint remain unchanged until the end of the narrative:

> For my master, whose restless, craving, vicious nature roved about day and night, seeking whom to devour, had just left me, with stinging, scorching words; words that scathed ear and brain like fire. O, how I despised him! I thought how glad I should be, if some day when he walked the earth, it would open and swallow him up, and disencumber the world of a plague. (Jacobs 20)

Dr. Flint was portrayed as "the epitome of corrupt white male power" (Carby 57) who lacked basic qualities a gentleman should possess. Other slaveholders depicted as the "white devil" in the slave narrative, like his son-in-law Mr. Dodge and his son Nicholas Flint, are simply different versions of the Dr. Flint character who are trying to prevent Harriet´s freedom and even pull her back into slavery once she escapes.

A similar situation is with the portrayal of mistresses, especially Mrs. Flint, her daughter Ellen, and her daughter-in-law young Mrs. Flint. True white womanhood was something that Mrs. Flint and other mistresses in the narrative actively tried to portray themselves as Mrs. Flint shedding tears and showing sentimentality towards Linda's aunt Nancy whose health she ruined "with cruel selfishness…by years of incessant, unrequited toil, and broken rest" (Jacobs 163) was the prime example of the hypocrisy between their public and private persona. Her criticism of the white mistresses was a lot more detailed and revealing as she describes Mrs. Flint's hypocrisy, cruelty, and lack of true womanhood values: "Mrs. Flint, like many southern women, was totally deficient in energy. She had not 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. She was a member of the church…" (14).

As far as poor whites go in the narrative, Jacobs only points out the unit of them organizing, searching homes of black people, and committing violent acts following the Nat Turner slave revolt (70). The depiction of them was already analyzed previously as was the character of Mr. Thorne who treacherously tried to return Jacobs to slavery. Like in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, there is an attack on the Southern Church through examples of immoral clergymen like Rev Mr. Pike trying to deceive the slaves when preaching to them exclusively about their inferiority and respecting their masters in order to keep them enslaved both in body and mind (76).

4.2. "The Kind White Folks"

The stereotype of the "white devil" has its sharp opposition to the stereotype of the "white ally."; the characters that strive to oppress and those that strive to liberate the black protagonist. In between those two, there is a grey area of white characters who are a part of the system that oppresses but are not involved in the usual cruelties of slavery and are portrayed to possess certain moral qualities that the "white devil" characters do not. This stereotype befalls the characters that are mostly inherently kind and good, but some of them are corrupted by slavery and change their behavior. They still, however, are not characters that are actively working to liberate the black protagonist and other slaves. The adjective "kind" is mostly used when portraying their character.

In that sense, Frederick Douglass exclaims that Sophia Auld has a "white face beaming with the most kindly emotions" (Douglass 41) and that she is a "kind and tender-hearted woman" (47). Solomon Northup used that same term for Mr. Ford claiming "there never was a more kind, noble, candid, Christian man than William Ford" (Northup 51). Harriet Jacobs´s notions that Mr. Sands spoke "kind words" (Jacobs 60) to Linda and that she will never "find another mistress so kind as the one who was gone" (10) are also dominated by the adjective "kind." To be stereotyped in this category, it was necessary to show a very caring nature towards the protagonist and black slaves because there are notions of "kind masters" who were considered sympathetic just because they fed their slaves or gave them a day of rest for Christmas. For those characters, it was indicated

by the authors themselves that not whipping slaves for being late to work in the field gives one "the proud name of being a kind master" (Douglass 16) with the clear irony of the author.

When the previously presented effects of slavery cause a change, usually deterioration, in their character, the "kind white folks" can momentarily change the category of the stereotype to which they belong. Such characters were usually white women in slave narratives who would be portrayed as kind to their slaves but also corrupted by either their own violence or inciting the violence towards the slave girl their husband has taken interest in. Still, the kindness of momentarily corrupted characters is praised by the black authors of slave narratives which still indicates that the first instinct of those characters was kindness. There were many slaveholders that treated their slaves in a humane and kind fashion according to the testimonies of slaves as a lot of former slaves that wrote narratives "had one or two masters whom they considered kindly men" (Blassingame 263-4). Although lesser in number, these characters serve as symbols of hope that the Southern man is not inherently evil or cruel, but that the system of slavery causes their decay.

Frederick Douglass incorporates a small number of the "kind white folks" stereotype characters. One of them is even in the position of an overseer who serves as a foil character for the other two cruel overseers, Mr. Severe and Mr. Gore. An example of a more humane overseer is given only shortly in the character of Mr. Hopkins to emphasize the notion of overseers more often being cruel and more successful in their job when being cruel. Mr. Hopkins was "less cruel, less profane, and made less noise" (Douglass 24) and although he whipped the slaves, he "seemed to take no pleasure in it" (24). That is why "he was called by the slaves a good overseer" (24). That notion did not go in his favor at all, as the overseers that became too familiar with the slaves or were regarded as the kind usually ended up being dismissed (Blassingame 273). The fact is that in *The Narrative,* only Mr. Hopkins was dismissed from his position while the other extremely cruel overseers did not.

Another "kind" character was given in one of Douglass's masters, Hugh Auld who was a brother of Thomas Auld. It is not that Hugh Auld is so much morally higher than his brother Thomas, but his treatment of Douglass was better as he exclaims "few slaves could boast of a kinder master and mistress" (56) when referring to Hugh Auld and his wife Sophia. That was the first impression and image of both that Douglass portrays. In addition to that, the corruption that took place in both of their characters is excused by Douglass as the consequence of slavery and vices. He states that "a great change had taken place in Master Hugh and his once kind and

affectionate wife" (58) and that the "influence of brandy upon him and of slavery upon her, had effected a disastrous change in the characters of both" (59). This way he upkeeps the impression that Hugh and Sophia Auld are victims of their environment and circumstances, but are at least showing signs of humanity unlike white characters like Mr. Gore, Mr. Severe, Thomas Auld, and Colonel Llyod, later in the narrative Douglass confirms this portrayal. When Douglass suffered injuries in a fight with white carpenters in Mr. Gardner's shipyard, he comments on their reaction: "He listened attentively to my narration of the circumstances leading to the savage outrage, and gave many proofs of his strong indignation at it. The heart of my once overkind mistress was again melted into pity. My puffed-out eye and blood-covered face moved her to tears" (97). The author emphasizes this even more as he makes a strong comparison of Hugh Auld and his brother Thomas based on a reaction to a similar situation when Thomas did not protect Douglass from Covey. Douglass says of Hugh that as "irreligious as he was, his conduct was heavenly, compared with that of his brother Thomas under similar circumstances" (97). The fact that in an important scene, Hugh forbids his wife to teach Douglass how to read and write because it "would spoil the best nigger in the world" (44) insinuates that Hugh has no desire to help Douglass achieve freedom like a "white ally" would with his priority being his own profit which Douglass brings him. The initial portrayal of his mistress Sophia Auld is what undoubtedly separates her not only from the "white devil" characters but even from some "white allies" who did not receive this kind of warm description of character. This could be influenced by the white womanhood idea the society promotes or even an infatuation with her character as there is not a more positive description of a white character in the three analyzed slave narratives than this one:

> My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door,—a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen… Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music. (Douglass 43-4)

Douglass potentially exaggeratedly builds up Sophia Auld's character so he can use her as a symbol of the effects of slavery pointing out that slavery can corrupt even the purest of hearts. This initial kindness is then countered with the emphasis on the effects of slavery on her character:

"The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon" (44). The author makes this comparison of her character before and after the specific moment of change using the strong juxtaposition of terms "angelic" and "demon." Her true nature is that of a kind person which is latter confirmed, suggesting that maybe there is hope for reconciliation.

Mr. Freeland is another slaveholder Douglass sets apart from others comparing his character to that of Covey: "The former (slaveholder though he was) seemed to possess some regard for honor, some reverence for justice, and some respect for humanity" (81). An important aspect he compliments as well is that Mr. Freeland did not make "no pretensions to or profession of, religion" (81-2), using that as another chance for the attack on southern man's religion by stating that out of all slaveholders he met "religious slaveholders are the worst" (82). The author once again plays with the name of the character so the name "freeland" is a symbol of the treatment he received by him. He states that he did not receive "a single blow" during that time and names Freeland "the best master I ever had, till I became my own master" (Douglass 86). Therefore, he was a character that was involved in the system, profited from the system, but did not find it necessary to be involved in any methods of cruelty or violence.

Solomon Northup in *Twelve Years a Slave* introduces a few white characters of this stereotype as well with clear intentions to show that "there were many planters who dealt with their slaves in a humane fashion" (Blassingame 263). The most important one is the character of Solomon's first master William Ford. From the first-time meeting Ford, Northup once again presents an image of his appearance and character that sets the tone around his character for the remainder of the narrative: "He was a good-looking man, and appeared to have reached about the middle age of life. There was nothing repulsive in his presence; but on the other hand, there was something cheerful and attractive in his face, and in his tone of voice" (Northup 47). This he continues with reporting examples of the kind treatment he received from him. From little things like offering him food and rest to bigger things like cutting the rope Tibeats put around his neck and comforting him after the fight with Tibeats. As when Douglass was attacked and Hugh and Sophia Auld showed sympathy, so did Mr. and Mrs. Ford to Solomon: "He listened attentively, and when I had concluded, spoke to me kindly and sympathetically…" (85). Other slaves also had deep regard for Ford and his kindness too as his slave Harry "spoke kindly and affectionately of him, as a child would speak of his own father" (55). That was a common thing in the South as

slaves tended to look at kind slaveholders as their kind fathers (Blassingame 293). Northup explains how even though Ford was a slaveholder and part of the institution that people seem to look at everybody involved in with suspicion of their character, what he experienced with Ford was only positive and that "there never was a more kind, noble, candid, Christian man than William Ford" (51). He even provided an excuse for his sole involvement in the system in the first place, claiming that regardless of the influence of slavery he was a great man. He concluded his portrayal as one of the most positive white characters in slave narratives by stating: "Were all men such as he, slavery would be deprived of more than half its bitterness" (52).

Another slaveholder painted in a positive light was Elisha Berry who was Eliza's master and lover. When describing him to Solomon, Eliza presented him "as a man of naturally a kind heart, who always promised her that she should have her freedom, and who, she had no doubt, would grant it to her then, if it were only in his power" (27). There was one overseer of notice in *Twelve Years a Slave*, Mr Chapin, and he was portrayed in a positive light as a "kindly-disposed man" (62). Although he was employed in a wretched position as an overseer, Chapin still shows different acts of kindness towards Solomon. The most important act of kindness was saving Solomon when Tibeats came to kill him and defending him, a black man, in front of another white man: "Whoever moves that slave another foot from where he stands is a dead man. In the first place, he does not deserve this treatment. It is a shame to murder him in this manner. I never knew a more faithful boy than Platt" (67).

The wives of the two most notable slaveholders in Northup's narrative and mistresses are Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Epps, who stand in strong opposition. Mistress Epps's cruelties towards Patsey have been discussed, but there is a positive approach towards her portrayal from Northup as well. He states that there was a good side to her, but the jealousy and hate resulting from her husband´s infidelity corrupted her character. In other circumstances "she would have been pronounced an elegant and fascinating woman" (117). The other side of her, Northup saw in her treatment of himself and all other slaves except Patsey: "She had been well educated at some institution this side the Mississippi; was beautiful, accomplished, and usually good-humored. She was kind to all of us but Patsey – frequently, in the absence of her husband, sending out to us some little dainty from her own table" (117). The conclusive judgment by Northup is that she was not inherently evil, but that she "was possessed of the devil, jealousy…" (117).

On the other side, there is a completely good and fair mistress, just like her husband, Mrs. Ford. The few depictions of her show that she was the same kind spirit as her husband. Giving her

slaves the Bible and asking Solomon to rest after he was attacked by Tibets were some of the acts of kindness she offers the protagonist. Northup points out that he "indulged the most grateful feelings towards Master and Mistress Ford" (86) and when referring to mistress Ford calls her "gentle and generous…protectress" (87). Solomon also mentions Miss Mary McCoy whom he compares to William Ford in terms of her kindness and Northup's portrayal of her is very similar to that initial one of Sophia Auld by Douglass. As Solomon writes about her appearance and character:

> As she stood there, clad in her rich apparel, her face animated with pleasure, I thought I had never looked upon a human being half so beautiful. I dwell with delight upon the description of this fair and gentle lady, not only because she inspired me with emotions of gratitude and admiration, but because I would have the reader understand that all slave-owners on Bayou Boeuf are not like Epps, or Tibeats, or Jim Burns. Occasionally can be found, rarely it may be, indeed, a good man like William Ford, or an angel of kindness like young Mistress McCoy. (Northup 171)

Mary McCoy is called "the beauty and the glory of Bayou Boeuf" and told to be "beloved by all her slaves (Northup 170)."

Harriet Jacobs points out, as do Douglass and Northup, that there are "humane slaveholders" and not all of them are cruel, but those humane ones are "like angels' visits-few and far between" (Jacobs 55). The one with a major role in the narrative is the father of the protagonist's children, Mr. Sands who is in comparison to the "white devil" characters like Mr. Flint, seems like an angel. Even though Linda has some quarrels with him, mostly about her children's freedom and treatment, he at least possesses sympathy and radiates kindness. It is not possible to call him an "ally" since Jacobs portrays him, from her point of view, as untrustworthy when it comes to freeing her children. And even though he frees them, his episode with her brother William with whom he was annoyed for escaping, does make him seem untrustworthy. He is still a slaveholder as that episode with William following him formally as his slave confirms, but even William pointed out in his letter that Sands "always treated him kindly" (150). Still, maybe in some other circumstances, Jacobs would not hesitate to portray him as an "ally." When writing about him she calls him her "friend" (61) just like she does all the other "allies" that helped her escape slavery. Their relationship, Jacobs does not portray in any romantic fashion, but states his "sympathy," "kind words," and wish to "aid" her made her become his lover. This was, one of the

more positively portrayed relationships between a white man and a black slave woman and she comments that he "was a man of more generosity and feeling" (61) than Dr. Flint and he would be willing to grant her freedom (61). In any confrontation about Linda, their children, and freedom, Mr. Sands always "spoke kind and encouraging words" (65). When it comes to the love of the children he had with Linda, there is some change and contradiction as in the beginning when Benjamin was born Jacobs states that he was very kind to Benjamin. Later, maybe influenced by the fact Mr. Sands got married and had his white children, Jacobs states that her daughter Ellen said Mr. Sands did not care for her as he did for his white daughter while she was with him. Ellen exclaimed to her mother: "I am nothing to my father, and he is nothing to me" (211), but regardless of his relationship with his children, Mr. Sands is one of the more positive white characters in the narrative.

What is interesting in *The Incidents* is that for the first time in slave narratives, there is a positive mention of a slave trader, a position which is usually understood to contain the worst perpetrators of oppression without any kind of mercy or sympathy. Harriet Jacobs mentions one slave trader that showed kindness and helped her children become free. This slave trader bought her children from Dr. Flint as instructed by Mr. Sands. He did not try to deceive them and refused to sell William after being offered to do so. Even Harriet claimed that as much as she hated the slave traders in general who she thought were "the vilest wretches on earth" (120), she had to acknowledge that this man was different from them. He even said that it would be his last time buying or selling slaves since "trading in niggers is a bad business for a fellow that's got any heart" (120).

Mistresses that showed the black protagonist kindness were also present along with short incidents of a young mistress who cared for her slaves even though her husband did not as Jacobs exclaims that she "rendered every kindness to the slaves that her unfortunate circumstances permitted" (56). There is also a friendly lady in the neighborhood that tried to persuade Dr. Flint to let Linda be bought by her black lover as an act of kindness towards Linda (Jacobs 42). The mistress that helped Linda gain her freedom was her first mistress who raised her after her mother died. She promised her mother that she will take care of Linda and her other children and so she did kindly. She was so kind toward Linda that growing up with she felt "free from care as that of any free-born white child" (9). When that mistress died, however, Linda thought she would be freed by her will, but it was not the case. Linda resented her kind mistress for that and exclaimed that even though she taught her "the precepts of God's Word: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' she still did not recognize Linda "as her neighbor," but only as her slave (10). Still, Jacobs

concludes that she has much love for her old mistress: “As a child, I loved my mistress; and, looking back on the happy days I spent with her, I try to think with less bitterness of this act of injustice. While I was with her, she taught me to read and spell; and for this privilege, which so rarely falls to the lot of a slave, I bless her memory” (10). She did not consciously help Linda reach her freedom, but inadvertently by giving her education she gave her the tools most slaves did not get. For that reason, Lydia Maria Child “identifies her as Brent's first benefactor” (Gunning 139), but Jacobs explains what kind of fate she extended to her upon her death in order to negate that.

4.3. “The White Ally”

The stereotype of the “white ally,” or better yet benefactors and abolitionists, incorporates all characters that purposely either help or strive to help the black protagonist and other slaves escape slavery and achieve freedom. These are the characters who the black protagonists trusted to help them on their journey to freedom and who repaid that trust. They are obviously an important aspect in the previously mentioned abolitionist agenda as their positive portrayal is very important in promoting abolitionism as well. Not all characters under this stereotype have been directly involved in the abolitionist movement, but all of them helped the slaves reach their goal which is freedom. Some were also preaching the ideas of abolishing slavery while others just worked as benefactors for either the black protagonist or some other slaves in the narratives.

In the narratives, they were usually called “friends,” or more directly, “abolitionists” and “benefactors.” In that way, Douglass calls Joseph Ricketson and William C. Taber “friends” (Douglass 109), Northup refers to Bass as “friend and benefactor” (Northup 166), and Jacobs hides the true name of a woman who helped her hide from Dr. Flint by calling her “white benefactress” (Jacobs 171). Their portrayal was always dedicated to showing “white allies” as the kindest and best human beings who were the only ones treating slaves as human beings themselves, and all authors share deep feelings of gratitude and respect for them.

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass contains several established members of the abolitionist movement who are either mentioned in the narrative or have written a preface and co-signed the narrative itself. All that makes perfect sense since Frederick Douglass was one of the leading abolitionists and a very active member of the movement after his escape from slavery and especially during the process of writing the narrative. It was already mentioned that the two

leading members of the movement, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, wrote a preface and a letter that was added to the narrative co-singing Douglass's testimony. As far as the abolitionists and benefactors in the narrative itself, the most important one is David Ruggles who was the first one that helped Douglass when he was in New York "without home and without friends" (Douglass 107) in the "den of hungry lions" (106). The status of a fugitive slave was more than an unpleasant situation for Douglass, and Ruggles was the first one who relieved him from it. In his description of David Ruggles's actions, Douglass says that he will never forget his "vigilance, kindness, and perseverance" (Douglass 108). He also shares the warmest of sentiments about the man: "I am glad of an opportunity to express, as far as words can, the love and gratitude I bear him" (108). The author also compliments the work of Ruggles who was helping many other slaves escape too (108). He describes how he found him and provided him with a safe place in New York before organizing his wedding with Anne and then his journey to New Bedford. With a marriage certificate and a "five-dollar bill from Mr. Ruggles" (109), Douglass started his trip up to New Bedford with Ruggles organizing the whole thing. When Douglass and Anne reached New Bedford, they were met by two more "white allies" Joseph Ricketson and William C. Taber. Besides calling them friends, Douglass exclaims how they were very trustworthy as "their friendliness put us fully at ease" (109). The "white allies" often provided what other white characters rarely did earlier in the narrative and that was to instill trust and hope in the protagonists. There is also a short mention of one potential "white ally" whom Douglass met while he was in slavery and that is a preacher by the name of Mr. Cookman. He was described as "a good man" and "instrumental in getting Mr. Samuel Harrison, a very rich slaveholder, to emancipate his slaves…" (63). There would certainly be a larger number of people in the narrative who helped Douglass escape slavery and achieve freedom, but he warns the readers that he does not want to incriminate all of those who helped him, nor does he want to give slaveholders any help in "guarding a door whereby some dear brother bondman might escape his galling chains" (100).

Solomon Northup, being born a free man in the North, only required a "white ally" to send a letter in his name to the North. There were two important "white ally" characters that sent the letters. Only one of those resulted in his freedom, but both men carried out their promise to Solomon and provided him with great kindness. The first of them was a sailor, John Manning. He was as "noble-hearted, generous sailor as ever walked a deck" (Northup 41). Northup calls him a "good friend" and describes how Manning himself offered to help him and kept his promise. His was a face "full of benevolent expression" (41) and was the first such character Northup came across in the South. The other one was the man fully responsible for Solomon's escape and

freedom. The gratitude he expresses towards Mr. Bass was immeasurable as he calls him his "deliverer – a man whose true heart overflowed with noble and generous emotions" (157). When portraying his appearance and overall character, the author exclaimed: "He was a large man, between forty and fifty years old, of light complexion and light hair. He was very cool and self-possessed, fond of argument, but always speaking with extreme deliberation" (157). Northup also gives further details into Bass's life by revealing that he had no children and was an 'old bachelor' who wandered around (158). He expresses that Bass was open about his political views which did not go with the circumstances of the South and that he was a "liberal to a fault" (158). That was what even motivated Solomon to approach him with his request for help. Bass's conversation with Epps about slavery was a very powerful scene as it directly puts a Southern slaveholder and a character of the "white devil" stereotype under attack from a "white ally" character. That discussion reveals not only the strong political stance that Bass had, but also exposes the hypocrisy, corruption, and immorality that the Epps is trying to defend. They were talking about the Declaration of Independence, the unlawfulness of holding slaves, the white responsibility in keeping the slaves uneducated. Although the argument between the two ends in a non-hostile nature, Bass´s statements were very powerful, especially the one sounding out a threat: "There's a sin, a fearful sin, resting on this nation, that will not go unpunished forever. There will be a reckoning yet – yes, Epps, there's a day coming that will burn as an oven" (159). All Bass's meetings and conversations with Solomon were very heartfelt and he showed great sympathy towards him with the reassurance that his freedom is his focus (166). Solomon believed him wholeheartedly and put all his faith in Bass. The statements that Northup assigns to Bass make him one of the most positive white characters in slave narratives. One of those is: "If I can succeed in getting you away from here, it will be a good act that I shall like to think of all my life" (168).

Sending the letters to the North would be futile if Solomon did not have "friends" in the North. A lot of them were either abolitionists or very sympathetic and interested in their friend who was enslaved in the South. The most notable one is Henry B. Northup whose name Solomon's family carries and who is a relative of the family. In the first chapter of *Twelve Years a Slave*, Northup presents Henry by stating that he "is the man to whom, under Providence, I am indebted for my present liberty, and my return to the society of my wife and children" (6). Henry B. Northup made great efforts to free Solomon going to senators and governors that named him "an agent, with full power" to go to the South and restore Solomon to freedom (174). That is exactly what he did by going South, finding Bass, and through him Solomon. A very powerful scene was also

Henry B Northup as a "white ally" directly going to the plantation and freeing the black protagonist from slavery.

Other "white allies" mentioned that have taken part in helping him achieve his freedom were the already mentioned Cephas Parker and William Perry to whom Solomon wrote his letters as he considered them friends. They owned a store Solomon shopped at in Saratoga Springs and upon receiving letters from him they right away took them to Henry to see what can be done for Solomon (173). Another one mentioned to help Henry B. Northup in his efforts was John P. Waddill who Solomon calls "a legal gentleman of distinction, and a man of fine genius and most noble impulses" (175). Waddill's sentiments about Solomon's case were similar to other "allies" and he took great interest in finding Solomon and getting him out of slavery as "he was a man in whose honorable heart emotions of indignation were aroused by such an instance of injustice" (175).

In *The Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Jacobs points out multiple characters from different places and positions in society. While in the South, she describes short episodes with characters who acted as "white allies" towards her or other slaves. One of those was the unnamed clergyman and his wife who were loved by the slaves to whom he preached in a proper way with a "sermon adapted to their comprehension" (Jacobs 80). Even though he and his wife owned five slaves, the way they treated them was like the "kind white folks" do, but in addition to that, his wife taught them how to read and write. His sermons were very popular among the slaves as he was a good man and "it was the first time they had ever been addressed as human beings" (80). As his wife got sick, they decided to free all their slaves completely so therefore they provided them knowledge and freedom which was truly remarkable in the South. He was naturally not loved there by the slaveholders. His preaching was very "liberal" and aimed at abolitionism as Jacobs retells it: "Your skin is darker than mine; but God judges men by their hearts, not by the color of their skins" (80-1). The expression of that idea was very powerful. When trying to run away Jacobs mentions those who helped her but does not provide their names either.

One of the most important allies in that was the so-called "white benefactress" who provided a safe place for Linda to hide in her own home. What is interesting about this "white benefactress" is that her husband was a slave trader and she herself held slaves whom she treated kindly. Still, she was willing to help Linda if her name was not revealed since it would be a shame in Southern society to be humane and aid slaves (111). Jacobs calls her act of kindness "the deed of Christian womanhood" (113) and express large gratitude towards her "who had so generously

befriended the poor, trembling fugitive" (124). Her actions lead directly to giving Linda a chance to escape slavery and achieve freedom and although she was a slaveholder her intention of helping a slave escape slavery is what makes her a "white ally."

The next benefactors that helped Linda escape and become free are the captain and the sailors with whom she sailed to the North. The captain reassured Linda and her friend Fanny multiple times that he will protect them and will not betray them. Linda still affected by the "snakes" while enslaved had a hard time trusting the captain and his men (176). The captain and the sailors acted as "white allies" from the beginning and the captain expressed his dislike for the slave trade business even though he was also a Southerner. Adding to the number of Southern white characters who oppose slavery and act to facilitate escape for slaves. The captain's treatment of them, Linda comments by saying "if Fanny and I had been white ladies, and our passage lawfully engaged, he could not have treated us more respectfully" (177). Linda concludes with an expression of gratitude towards the "kind captain" and says that she "should never cease to be grateful for what he did for them" (179).

The special "white allies" to Linda specifically were both the first and the second Mrs. Bruce. The first one was "a kind and gentle lady, and proved a true and sympathizing friend" (188) as she gave Linda the job, treated her kindly, protected her from the racist exclamations, and helped her when she was in danger of being discovered. Linda was sure that she had no prejudice against color as she was an English woman. When Linda talked to her about her struggles, she "listened with true womanly sympathy, and told me she would do all she could to protect me" (200). When Mrs. Bruce died Linda concluded: I had lost an excellent friend" (204). The second Mrs. Bruce was American and "had a most hearty dislike" of slavery (212). Linda describes her right away as "a person of excellent principles and a noble heart" (212). This Mrs. Bruce also employed Linda and treated her kindly, but one of the biggest confirmations of her character was when Linda was in danger once again. Mrs. Bruce was ready to give Linda her baby in order to further protect her from the slave hunters as she said "they will be obliged to bring the child to me" (216) and that is how she could find her again. She also organized her shelter and expressed that she will not allow Linda to be carried back to slavery. The gratitude that Linda had was immense: "The noble heart! The brave heart! The tears are in my eyes while I write of her. May the God of the helpless reward her for her sympathy with my persecuted people" (217). The final act of kindness that Linda very much appreciated was Mrs. Bruce buying her freedom completely, but the fact that it even had to be done or that she did not manage to do it herself was troubling to Linda (223). Still, meeting "white allies" like that was rare and cherished by all slaves in all their accounts.

5. White Children and The Inheritance of Slavery

A special category of white characters that do not belong under any stereotype are the white children. Their portrayal is usually related to the portrayal of their parents and society that they were raised in as an indication of the influences it could have on their young minds. The messages about white children are also often about the future and the inheritance of slavery that is being taught from one generation to the other continuing the vicious cycle. The black children were often raised alongside white children, playing with them without any understanding that they were slaves. Both Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass express that when talking about their early childhood. Often their masters, and sometimes their fathers at the same time, treated them very kindly while they were young, and it created confusion in their minds. Still, most of the masters were not kind to their young slaves (Blassingame 184-5).

The interaction with his black playmates is one of the things that also shaped the white child's character. Blassingame points out that "antebellum Southerners frequently noted the Africanization of their children by the slaves" (101) as the white children started speaking more and more like their slaves. The black and white children would play together like there is not a single difference between them. Harriet Jacobs recounts in her narrative one time seeing "two beautiful children playing together" (Jacobs 32) with one of them white and the other black. Her thoughts as she saw them embrace were about the great difference that will befall them later in their life and "the inevitable blight that would fall on the little slave's heart" (32). The difference in their social status and the values taught would eventually take over any emotional connection there was in their childhood (Carby 52). The impact of these "black childhood playmates" was still noticeable as the white children would usually try to protect their black friends from the sale, treated them better, or even "preferred the company of slaves to that of their white neighbors" (Blassingame 266-7). Frederick Douglass shortly mentions one of these childhood relationships in his narrative when he explains his relationship with a young master Daniel Lloyd. He states how he spent a lot of time with Daniel and how his "connection with Master Daniel was of some advantage" (Douglass 38) to him as Daniel protected him from other boys and shared his cake with him (38). Despite the great childhood memories and the time spent with black children, he was still being raised in a society that "stressed formalized courtship, romanticized women as angelic, made a fetish of the family, frowned on public displays of affection, encouraged prolific childbearing, and promoted early marriages" (Blassingame 265). Those are the values that all the

white characters in the narratives, especially in the higher social positions, were taught and made to believe.

Along with those, they would also be taught from an early age, regardless of gender, about white superiority over black and how their slaves were supposed to respect them. Sometimes some of the lessons in the management of slaves would also be white slaveholding fathers explaining and showing, even to their daughters, how cruelty is a way to control their slaves. They are even encouraged to participate in the punishments in order to "reinforce their superiority through bloodletting discipline" (Jones-Rogers 28) which "allowed the children to practice the more brutal manifestations of mastery" (28). Therefore, it is not surprising when Solomon Northup concludes about the upbringing of white children in the South that everything the white child hears or sees during his early years can only leave an impression on him "that the rod is for the slave's back" (122) and it will be impossible to change his mindset. This would be the excuse that is provided for the slaveholder, but it would not exempt him from criticism when he starts his mastery too. The examples of the violence committed by white women in slave narratives reject the notion that women did not understand the wretchedness of slavery, but Rogers explains this as well with the notion that young white girls were surrounded by that same oppression of black people as were male children (Rogers 40-41).

Besides the young Daniel Lloyd in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, there are other white children in the three analyzed narratives that were usually shortly depicted and used to point out the effects of slavery on the future generation of white slaveholders. Another one that Douglass mentioned was the young Thomas Auld who was not used for that purpose perhaps because he was too young. Here Douglass only mentioned that while he was a boy he was taken in by Sophia and Hugh to take care of little Thomas (Douglass 41-42). Other important white children in his narrative were the poor young white boys that taught Douglass how to read. They are not used for the purpose of criticizing society, but rather pointing out how poverty brought people together in the city and these young boys were not poisoned by the prejudice and slavery as Douglass says of their treatment of him: "they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free" (49). He talks highly of them, calls them his friends, and upon leaving them says: "It was to those little Baltimore boys that I felt the strongest attachment" (59). Solomon Northup mentions only one white child whom he used, as previously mentioned, to explain the effects of slavery on the white character from an early age and the circumstances in which white children were raised in. Young master Epps and his already corrupted behavior he portrays as following:

> Epps' oldest son is an intelligent lad of ten or twelve years of age. It is pitiable, sometimes, to see him chastising, for instance, the venerable Uncle Abram. He will call the old man to account, and if in his childish judgement it is necessary, sentence him to a certain number of lashes, which he proceeds to inflict with much gravity and deliberation. Mounted on his pony, he often rides into the field with his whip, playing the overseer, greatly to his father's delight. Without discrimination, at such times, he applies the rawhide, urging the slaves forward with shouts, and occasional expressions of profanity, while the old man laughs, and commends him as a thorough-going boy. (Northup 155)

Epps's son is like all children learning from his father and that behavior already corrupted him as he has no regard for slaves even the older ones like Uncle Abram. This is in its simplicity an example of bad parenting but in those circumstances, it is far more than that. It is continuing the institution and the beliefs that oppress a whole race of people and as already mentioned inflict damage on their own character too as far as their morality, family ties, and life in general. Northup concludes that the "influence of the iniquitous system necessarily fosters an unfeeling and cruel spirit, even in the bosoms of those who, among, their equals, are regarded as humane and generous" (Northup 155).

Harriet Jacobs only brings very short mentions of white children with the usual general statements of the polar opposition of the two upbringings. The criticism of the white family she extends to the white children as she states that the "slaveholder's sons are, of course, vitiated, even while boys, by the unclean influences everywhere around them. Nor do the master's daughters always escape" (Jacobs 57). She continues to describe the corruption that then was placed on the young white girls who would pursue relations with slaves just like their fathers (57). She does mention young master Nicholas, who she also describes when he was older, as learning from his father Dr. Flint and treating his slaves in a similar manner. Linda's brother William tells her about the behavior of young Nicholas who "whipped the little boys, but was a perfect coward when tussle ensued between him and white boys of his own size" (20). With these kinds of short notions about the white children, slave narrative authors present their own outlook on the future and the improbability that the next generation of white people in the South is going to improve their behavior and regain the moral values lost in previous generations.

Conclusion

The genre of slave narrative remains one of "the most important and most neglected body of early American writing" (Sekora 2). The messages black authors of slave narratives send were important on the political and social level as well as literary (2). The approach authors of slave narratives to the depict white characters is very similar in the fact that they write with a clear intention of supporting the abolishment of slavery, drawing supporters to the idea (especially in the North), and presenting their lives through a series of unjust and cruel acts that happen to them (Dickson and Bruce 28-29). Black stereotypes like Sambo are known to the public as degrading stereotypes embodied in literary characters of the nineteenth century (Blassingame 224).

While the white characters in the slave narratives are not that recognizable to the public, the creation of white stereotypes to embody certain aspects of slavery is the approach to the matter they take as well. The three recognizable stereotypes in African American slave narratives are that of "the white devil," "the kind white folks," and "the white ally." The white characters are sometimes created according to a specific stereotype not to degrade the white character, but to embody specific ideas like the effects of slavery on the character or even the slavery itself. Some of those ideas are the decay of the white family through the character of Edwin Epps and his wife or the decay of white womanhood as women like Mrs. Flint and Mrs. Epps were corrupted by jealousy and hatred of the female slave (Zafar 2). There is also the numbness to violence that developed through the years of witnessing violent acts on a daily basis that made the most gruesome acts. The notion of interracial mistrust is also present which was explained by different examples of betrayal that happened between the races. All these effects of slavery would find their embodiment in the form of a white character. Along with the ideas white characters embodied, the judgment on the American society was also passed as both the North and the South were portrayed. The image of the North as the "land of freedom" is what separates the discourse around the two societies and still, the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act warranted criticism of the North as well.

All three authors express their views on the white characters they met on their journey from slavery to freedom which logically means that their judgment and the reader´s judgment are made specifically on the white character´s treatment of the black protagonist. The stereotype of the "white devil" character is a more regular occurrence as it serves as a testimony of the cruel nature of slavery, but for each of the major white antagonists, there is a foil white character. Therefore, for each Edwin Epps there is a William Ford and for each Edward Covey there is a Mr. Freeland.

In other words, the balance in the portrayal of white characters is created by offering the reader an alternative character that provides hope and belief that even in the Southern white man there is still some instinctual kindness. The stereotype of "kind white folks" puts an emphasis on instinctual kindness with a clear message of reconciliation and coexistence between races through those characters. Those two stereotypes include characters whose social position usually assumed that they are either active or passive constituents of the institution that is slavery. The only thing that differentiated them is the corruption that under the effects of slavery consumed certain characters more than others. Slaveholders, overseers, slave traders, kidnappers, and mistresses could either be cruel or kind towards their slaves, but unless they bring their slaves freedom, they will not be portrayed as stereotypical "white ally" characters. That stereotype only includes characters that are the symbol of the fight against slavery and those perpetuating it with their main intentions being only to help the black protagonist escape the system. The short mentions of white children and the notions about them from the narrators are also messages about the potential future of race relations in the US as the upbringing of white children of slaveholders are given is only pushing them further on the path of corruption.

The final thoughts on this wicked institution are given by the three authors of the analyzed slave narratives. They claim the portrayed variety of white characters exists, but even though there are "humane masters, as there certainly are inhuman ones" (Douglass 122) the institution itself "that tolerates such wrong and inhumanity" (122) can only be "cruel, unjust, and barbarous one" (22). The influence of the society in which a person is being brought in is enormous and even though reconciliation and coexistence are difficult, achieving it by only degrading each other will never be the solution. As Solomon Northup stated: "It is not the fault of the slaveholder that he is cruel, so much as it is the fault of the system under which he lives" (121). That is why the balanced portrayal of their oppressors was a huge statement by the black slave narrators who, by giving it, instilled confidence in every white and black reader of the slave narratives that for every cruelty in the world there is also kindness.

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