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Adrian N. Mulligan

*Bucknell University*, [amulliga@bucknell.edu](mailto:amulliga@bucknell.edu)

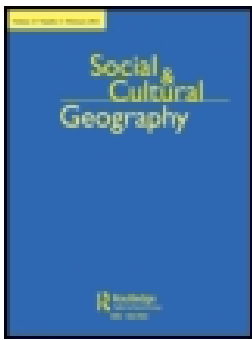
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## 'As a lever gains power by its distance from the fulcrum': tracing Frederick Douglass in the Irish Atlantic World

Adrian N. Mulligan

Department of Geography, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA, USA

### ABSTRACT

Following the publication of his autobiography and fearing recapture and return to slavery, in 1845 the abolitionist Frederick Douglass embarked on an 18-month lecture tour of the United Kingdom, during which his thinking on the subject of abolitionism developed significantly. While this period in Douglass' life has received only modest scholarly attention, even less has been paid to the fact that the tour commenced in Ireland – then arguably more akin to a colony than an integral region of the UK. Drawing on archival research and scholarship that advocates for a more interconnected sense of place, a more oceanic perspective on history and consequently a better sense of how political activity is forged relationally, the paper traces Douglass' journey through the Irish nodes of the abolitionist Atlantic network. In the process, it considers the degree to which Douglass was influenced by this colonial and deeply sectarian society, it illuminates a forgotten world of Irish abolitionist activity, and contributes to debates regarding intersecting histories and geographies in the Atlantic World.

**“De la même manière qu’un levier obtient sa puissance selon sa distance du point d’appui”: sur les traces de Frederick Douglass dans le monde atlantique irlandais**

### RÉSUMÉ

Suite à la publication de son autobiographie et craignant d'être à nouveau capturé et renvoyé à l'esclavage, en 1845, l'abolitionniste Frederick Douglass se lança dans une tournée de conférences autour du Royaume-Uni pendant dix-huit mois, durant lesquels sa réflexion sur le sujet de l'abolitionnisme évolua considérablement. Cette période de la vie de Douglass n'a guère suscité d'intérêt parmi les chercheurs, et encore moins, le fait que cette tournée ait commencé en Irlande, probablement plus proche d'une colonie à l'époque que faisant partie intégrante du Royaume-Uni. S'appuyant sur l'examen d'archives et une recherche qui prône un meilleur sens interconnecté d'appartenance à un lieu, un point de vue plus océanique de l'histoire et par conséquent, une meilleure idée de la façon dont l'activité politique se forge d'un point de vue relationnel, cet article retrace le voyage de Douglass à travers les nœuds irlandais du réseau abolitionniste

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### PALABRAS CLAVE

abolitionismo; Atlántico; red; Frederick Douglass; Irlanda; Reino Unido

atlantique. Ce faisant, l'article examine dans quelle mesure Douglass fut influencé par cette société coloniale et profondément sectaire, il éclaire un monde oublié d'activité abolitionniste irlandaise et contribue aux débats concernant les histoires et les géographies croisées du monde atlantique.

## **'Como una palanca gana potencia por su distancia desde el punto de apoyo': el rastreo de Frederick Douglass en el mundo atlántico de Irlanda**

### **RESUMEN**

Tras la publicación de su autobiografía y temiendo recaptura y volver a la esclavitud, en 1845 el abolitionista Frederick Douglass se embarcó en una gira de conferencias de dieciocho meses en el Reino Unido, durante la cual su pensamiento sobre el tema del abolitionismo se desarrolló significativamente. Si bien este período en la vida de Douglass ha recibido sólo una modesta atención académica, menos aún se ha notado el hecho de que la gira comenzó en Irlanda — entonces sin duda más parecida a una colonia que a una región integral del Reino Unido. Sobre la base de una investigación de archivo y estudios que abogan por un sentido más interconectado de lugar, una perspectiva más oceánica de la historia y en consecuencia una mejor idea de cómo la actividad política se forja relacionalmente, el trabajo traza el viaje de Douglass a través de los nodos irlandeses de la red atlántica abolitionista. En el proceso, se considera el grado en que Douglass fue influenciado por esta sociedad colonial y profundamente sectaria, se ilumina un mundo olvidado de la actividad abolitionista irlandesa, y se contribuye a debates en relación con la intersección de historias y geografías en el mundo atlántico.

## **Introduction**

[H]is words would be borne on the wings of the press beyond the Atlantic wave. They would fly up and down through the regions of the north – they would cross the line of the slave-holding south – they would reverberate through the valley of the Mississippi, and there was no part of the land into which they would not penetrate. (*Limerick Reporter*, 1845a)

Frederick Douglass was a nineteenth-century abolitionist, orator, writer, statesman and social reformer; he served as counsel to President Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War and is today widely considered by scholars to be one of the most important African-American intellectuals of his time. Many point to a pragmatic willingness to engage with the American Constitution as a significant philosophical development that then differentiated him from many of his abolitionist colleagues. In arguing that far from being a worthless racist document, the Constitution might instead be considered a promise in need of being at long last kept, Douglass was instrumental in nationalizing abolitionism and thus dramatically broadening its appeal during the antebellum period (Walter, 2000). In this regard, scholars point to Douglass' unique positionality; notably Gilroy (1993) who situates him firmly within that arena of intercultural exchange and blending he terms 'the Black Atlantic'. Here, Gilroy challenges the manner in which cultural histories have long been framed as essentially sedentary narratives unfolding within bounded national territories, and instead

proposes a radical shift in perspective so as to illuminate a hidden history of mobility and upheaval, which he contends lies at the heart of modernity. Taking inspiration from Gilroy, scholars such as Castronovo (1995) and Giles (2001), for example, argue that Douglass wrote figuratively from outside the American nation; forced to imaginatively envision its dimensions from the outside looking in – a result of his life experiences as both a slave in the south and a free black man in the north.

Scholars have recently gone further however, to argue that the location from which Douglass made his extra-national critique might be considered not solely figurative, but also to some extent *literal*. This scholarship contends that the 18-month period that Douglass spent in what was then the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (UK), while still only 25 years of age, was particularly formative to his developing a unique abolitionist stance. Furthermore, Douglass clearly forged a new-found sense of self during this period; markedly so perhaps, given the fact that British abolitionists controversially purchased his freedom from his Maryland master, enabling his return to Boston as a truly free black man, no longer living in fear of recapture (McFeely, 1991). Sweeney (2001, 2007), for example, argues that it was during this period that Douglass first realized something approximating a fuller sense of citizenship, and Eckel (2013) suggests it marks a transformation from his being a representative slave telling a personal story in a regional context, to his becoming a representative of *all American slaves*, telling their story in a global context. It was during this period too, that Douglass first began to publically formulate his aspirational vision of what a more inclusive sense of an American identity might look like. Douglass achieved all this by realizing the power of international networked advocacy; abolitionism then being constituted through the transatlantic circulation of personal correspondence, publications and petitions, not to mention the mobility of key agents such as himself (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Meyers, 2008).

While this scholarship focusing on Douglass' visit to the UK represents a welcome development, its inherent geographical argument nonetheless remains under-developed, since it largely contends that the rapid evolution of Douglass' thinking on the subject of abolitionism was simply a product of a general sense of freedom experienced by virtue of being outside the United States (US) for 18 months. Long overdue however, is a more geographically sensitive consideration of whether Douglass was influenced by anything particular he encountered while negotiating the various nodes of the international abolitionist network that then extended to the UK. Furthermore, while Douglass' visit to the UK has received only modest scholarly attention, even less has been paid to the fact that the UK then included Ireland, and his tour commenced there. This is quite significant, because although the Act of Union had created a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801, the latter was subsequently more akin to a colony than an integral region of the realm (Kearns, 2013).

In this paper, it is argued that understandings of Douglass' significant agency as an abolitionist can be enhanced by geographical analysis; that not only are his long-overlooked UK experiences just as deserving of analysis as those that took place in the US, but that it is also worth considering whether colonial Ireland in particular influenced him. The few scholars who have focused on Douglass' visit to Ireland include his biographer, Blassingame (1979), who has recovered a number of his Irish speeches, and Rolston (2003, 2004, 2009), a geographer who has considered the significance of his visit in the light of contemporary racism in Irish society and the ongoing Northern Irish peace process. Other scholars point to the fact that Douglass had long been inspired by political oratory associated with Irish

constitutional nationalism, and that his subsequent experiences in the colony contributed to his fast-developing sense of being a detached ethical observer of the world (Ferreira, 1999, 2001; Ganter, 2003; O'Neill, 2006; Sweeney, 2007). Most recently, Chaffin (2014) argues that Douglass' initial Irish experiences were so remarkably transformative by his own admission, that given the significance of his later career, they must therefore be considered as having an enormous impact on American history. In this regard, Chaffin (2014, pp. 5–6) states, for example, that '[d]uring the tour, Douglass honed habits of independence, discretion, compromise, self-reliance, and practical politics that served him well over the coming decades.'

Recently, some quite prominent individuals have gone even further however, to suggest that while visiting Ireland, Douglass unified the causes of abolitionism and Irish nationalism, for example, President Barack Hussein Obama (2011) claims that 'he quickly found common ground with the people locked in their struggle against oppression', and past Irish President, Mary McAleese (2011, pp. 1–2) states that 'it was Ireland and the Irish people who welcomed Douglass with a dignity and respect which had been completely absent in his earlier life'. While these suggestions that Douglass perhaps united two oppressed peoples while being widely welcomed on the island are tempting ones to make (perhaps, especially so given his public advocacy work in later life), some scholars point to a rather more complex situation during his visit. O'Neill (2006) and Sweeney (2007), for example, argue that rather than mingling with Irish Roman Catholics and championing their resistance to British colonialism, Douglass instead remained firmly in the company of Irish Protestants who were largely supportive of British rule, given the fact that they were also more supportive of abolitionism. Incidentally, it is this dominant dimension of Irish abolitionism which might account for why the movement has long been overlooked by historians of Ireland, given the fact that Irish Protestants have frequently been considered external to a state-endorsed, Roman Catholic nationalist narrative, or typecast within it according to their alignment with an accursed British colonial system (Boyce, 1991; Flemming & O'Day, 2005).

In considering the development of Douglass' agency as a young abolitionist in a more geographically sensitive manner therefore – namely by focusing not only on his UK lecture tour but also considering how he navigated an Irish colonial context driven by sectarianism – this paper draws upon the work of a number of historical geographers and historians who question state-centric accounts of past political activity. In his analysis of the early modern British Empire, for example, Ogborn (2002, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011) provides a number of epistemological avenues by which histories might be considered at a range of scales less bound by state territories and attendant nationalist narratives. In particular, Ogborn re-visions different places and times as constituted through the agency of historical figures engaged in such practices as writing, reading, printing and public oratory. Such practices also produce relationships that can be conceptualized as 'networks' or 'webs' characterized by the flow of ideas, material objects and people. Consequently, Ogborn illustrates how the production of meaning by key activists can be contextualized not only within specific locales but also with regard the degree and manner to which such activists were *networked*, with their oratory in particular reverberating in a host of other locales once transformed into print.

One such activist, orator and writer was Douglass, and in focusing upon his journey through the Irish nodes of a transatlantic abolitionist network, the paper utilizes an approach that Ogborn (2005, p. 382) describes as 'the trace'; a means by which scholars might recover

histories at a greater range of scales by attempting to ‘follow individual journeys, demonstrating how both intimate and large-scale histories and geographies intersect in wandering paths and personal transformations’. In a world suitably re-envisioned in terms of a complex and fluid circuitry criss-crossing oceans in particular, Ogborn (2005) argues that such a focus on individual agency has the potential to illuminate specific moments of interconnection, negotiation and contestation – often overlooked or under-acknowledged but deserving of recovery because of the significant imprint they leave upon societies. Ogborn’s re-envisioning of historical geographies, in particular focusing upon oceanic interconnectivity, is shared by Featherstone (2008, 2012, 2013), another geographer who has recovered numerous historical episodes of subaltern political activity forged through networked solidarity between different groups in different places across the Atlantic World. Featherstone’s scholarship also informs this paper, in particular his refusal to accept state-centred, territorially packaged, national historical narratives, and the manner in which he reveals how political activity has been forged *relationally*; in other words constituted through the strands of global interconnectivity that people bring to places. Not all places are interconnected in the same way, nor to the same degree, but like Ogborn, Featherstone energizes historical geography by re-envisioning the nature and scale of past political agency, consequently revealing what he terms ‘usable pasts’ that might inspire contemporary forms of subaltern political activity.

Furthermore, it is not just geographers but also historians who have called for historical geographies to be reframed in such a manner, for example, the contributors to the 2006 *American Historical Review Forum* on ‘Oceans of History’ who call for a ‘new thalassology’ (Horden & Purcell, 2006). Drawing from the ancient Greek word for the sea, *thalassa*, here Wigen (2006) contends that such ocean-oriented scholarship can reveal how maritime spaces are actually socially constructed, encourage emic rather than etic historical perspectives and illuminate a world of fragmentary and unstable, yet significant strands of interconnectivity. Games (2006) subsequently proposes Atlantic history as a *style of inquiry* that seeks to recover forgotten commonalities, convergences, circulations and transformative experiences. Furthermore, Games (2006, p. 757) urges scholars to adopt a similar approach as that advocated by Ogborn, in her argument that

[t]racing products and people within the Atlantic introduces us to the rich and varied world that the region contained and suggests ways in which the region emerges as a logical unit of historical analysis, providing a geographic space, for a fixed period of time, within which we can understand processes and transformations that otherwise might remain inexplicable.

This paper therefore employs ‘the trace’ as a more geographically sensitive style of inquiry, and is structured around a historical–geographical narrative and reconstruction of Douglass’ wandering path through Irish nodes in a larger Atlantic network. It was during this brief but arguably significant period in a remarkable life that Douglass claimed to be experiencing his first true sense of freedom, coinciding with his publicly revising his abolitionist argument. Adopting ‘the trace’ as an approach arguably holds great potential to reveal the degree and manner to which Douglass was influenced by particular experiences in this time and place. As such, this paper also seeks to contribute to an emerging body of work that considers political agency more relationally and expansively, that focuses on maritime spaces in particular, and that conceptualizes such locations as interconnected and networked in significant ways. Within this matrix, the paper traces Douglass’ Irish journey, to investigate whether the rapid development of his agency as an abolitionist during this period might be attributable to any particularly significant (and perhaps uniquely Irish) ‘moments’ of



interconnection, negotiation or contestation. In particular, the paper seeks to ascertain the degree to which Douglass transcended sectarian divisions in the colony, how he managed different audiences, whether he solely championed abolitionism or if he strayed into expressing support for the oppressed Irish Roman Catholic population as has been suggested – and if he did the latter, how he managed it without alienating his Protestant abolitionist hosts. Furthermore, by ‘tracing’ Douglass and by considering the significance of locations in which he spoke and wrote (and no doubt also observed, listened and learned), and by placing this personal journey within a broader historical–geographical context, the paper also seeks to reveal occluded dimensions of Ireland’s interconnectivity in the mid-nineteenth-century Atlantic World. To this end therefore, and drawing from the historian Vink (2007, p. 52) who advocates that the ‘new thalassology’ should not lose sight of the importance of specific places, the paper focuses on six locations in Douglass’ Irish journey; commencing with his attending an event at Faneuil Hall in Boston, in early 1842, and culminating with his visiting the city of Belfast, in late 1845.

### **Faneuil Hall, Boston**

On the evening of Friday, 28 January 1842, at a crowded Faneuil Hall in Boston, Massachusetts, the founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society, William Lloyd Garrison, dramatically introduced a young abolitionist by the name of Frederick Douglass to the predominantly Irish-American audience, as none other than ‘a chattel transformed into a man’ (Fulkerson, 1996, p. 87). Douglass had been born into slavery in Maryland sometime in 1818, and despite laws prohibiting the education of slaves, had nonetheless been taught to read and write as a child. In 1838 he escaped north with the help of Anna Murray, a free black Baltimore woman who would become his wife later that year; the newly-wed couple settling in New Bedford, Massachusetts, where Douglass found work on the docks and soon became involved in anti-slavery activities. It was here, sometime in 1841, that he was discovered by Garrison and recruited to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. The meeting at Faneuil Hall, called primarily to support abolition in the District of Columbia and for the reading of the ‘Great Irish Address’, was one of Douglass’ first public speaking engagements.

Douglass’ short speech was apparently well received, however the crowd of approximately 5000 – many of whom were members of the Boston Irish community – had been drawn not by this relative unknown but rather by the reading of the ‘Great Irish Address’ (Fulkerson, 1996). Garrison subsequently introduced it as a document ‘signed by Daniel O’Connell, Father Mathew, and sixty thousand other Irishmen’ (Abolitionist Leaflet, 1842). It had been prepared by the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society (HASS), an abolitionist organization founded in 1837 by Quakers in Dublin, Ireland, who hoped it would convince the Irish diasporic community to join the ranks of American abolitionists. From 1815 to 1845, between 800,000 and 1 million Irish men, women and children emigrated to the US, the majority Roman Catholic and to various degrees reluctant emigrants, who increasingly adopted an exile motif (Sim, 2013, p. 24). Many of these individuals would have considered Daniel O’Connell their hero. A very popular Irish lawyer, politician and constitutional Irish nationalist, it was O’Connell who had secured greater economic and political rights from the British colonial administration for his fellow Irish Roman Catholics, consequently earning him the moniker, *the Liberator*. With branches on both sides of the Atlantic, his Loyal National Repeal Association (LRNA) continued to advocate for none other than the repeal of the very Act of Union that had bound the



United Kingdom and Ireland together in 1801, arguing that it facilitated the ongoing subjugation of Irish Roman Catholics.

Significantly, O'Connell was also an ardent abolitionist whom Garrison had met in London as recently as 1840 at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, however in this regard he was very much the exception among Irish nationalists of the period. The other prominent signatory of the Address was Father Theobald Mathew, an Irish Roman Catholic priest whose enormously successful Cork Total Abstinence Society (CTAS) had convinced millions to take a temperance pledge renouncing the use of alcohol for life (Townend, 2002). As prominent Irish Roman Catholics lauded on both sides of the Atlantic therefore, Daniel O'Connell and Father Mathew were crucial signatories of the Great Irish Address, however it should be noted that the remainder of the signatories would likely have been Irish Protestant evangelicals, and most likely Methodists who were some of the strongest advocates of abolitionism outside of the US.

As Featherstone (2013) illuminates in his discussion of Irish subaltern political agency and identity during the late eighteenth century, in particular focusing on the nationalist rhetoric of the United Irishmen and their attempts to forge solidarity with other causes, abolitionism is something that Irish political leaders had previously endorsed. As Rodgers (1997, 2000, 2003, 2007) also points out however, although abolitionism had been championed in Ireland as early as the late eighteenth century, it nonetheless had never substantively taken hold. While notable abolitionists such as Olaudah Equiano toured Ireland in the 1790s, being welcomed in cities such as Belfast by an emergent middle class, Rodgers argues that they were more concerned with connecting their own nationalist cause to enlightened ideals of liberty and equality than they truly were with the plight of slaves. In her scholarship, she explains this situation by revealing the manner in which Ireland was then very much implicated economically in the Black Atlantic. For example, Rodgers (2000, 2003) points to the high lucrative provisioning of cheap food, clothing and shoes to slaves in the West Indies especially, and the importing of sugar, cotton and tobacco that produced a lot of wealth and power – especially amongst an Irish Roman Catholic mercantile community.

Despite its reported raucous endorsement at Faneuil Hall in January 1842, and the high hopes of American abolitionists that the Irish community in the US would subsequently soon rally to the abolitionist cause in the same manner as it was presumed they had all done in Ireland, the Great Irish Address fell on deaf ears. To understand why, it is important to consider two developments in particular that occurred in the wake of its reading. As Sim (2013) points out, for example, as a British Member of Parliament, O'Connell increasingly argued in favour of British imperial interests in the Oregon Territory while also damning American expansionism in Texas, in both instances employing an abolitionist argument. Furthermore, Garrisonian abolitionists adopted O'Connell's political tactics in their attempts to pressure Congress to abolish slavery by advocating for the *disunion* of the US. Both developments made it increasingly unlikely that the American-Irish would ever support abolitionism, since they feared it would not only ultimately imperil their own economic livelihoods, but in the meantime also require open disloyalty to their newly adopted homeland.

## The Cambria

Three years after appearing at Faneuil Hall, Douglass was no longer a relative unknown but rather a rising star of the abolitionist movement. This was especially so following the

publication of his autobiography in May 1845. Titled simply, *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, it provided vivid and chilling first-hand testimony of his early life as a Maryland slave before recounting an escape north to relative freedom. The book was immensely popular; owing much to the fact that it was one of the few occasions that a former slave had *himself* so eloquently detailed the horrors of slavery. Douglass' new-found fame was not without its dangers however, particularly since he had increased the likelihood of his recapture under the fugitive slave laws by naming the slaveholder whom he was still the legal property of, so as to refute charges that he was a fraudulent impostor. Hence his abolitionist colleagues and his mentor, Garrison, believed it prudent that he continue to advocate abolitionism *outside* of the US by embarking on an 18-month tour of the UK, commencing in Ireland where members of HASS had agreed to republish his autobiography, whose sales would also fund the venture. On 16 August 1845, Douglass therefore boarded the steamship *Cambria* in Boston harbor, bound for Liverpool, England. In so doing, he physically entered a crucial transatlantic conduit of the abolitionist network – following in the footsteps of earlier African-American abolitionists whose voices though suppressed at home, nonetheless found resonance from a distance.

Although he held a first-class ticket, Douglass was nonetheless forced to reside in a forward steerage compartment for fear that his black presence might offend other passengers (Pettinger, 2004). Word travelled quickly however that the young abolitionist was onboard the vessel, aided by the reported circulation of his *Narrative*, and on the final evening of the voyage – within sight of the Irish coastline and at the behest of a number of passengers – the Captain invited Douglass onto the promenade deck to deliver his first public lecture outside the US. What happened next would be widely reported in the press and in due course become an incident whose significance was not lost on Douglass, who came to rhetorically incorporate it into a number of his subsequent lectures.

After having decided to physically enter and travel through the abolitionist network, for 12 days Douglass inhabited perhaps one of its most crucial spaces, that of a paddle steamer crossing the Atlantic Ocean. The *Cambria* was owned and operated by the Cunard line, and an excellent example of how technology was then fast integrating the old world and the new. Unlike the abolitionist correspondence that frequently made this voyage however – its meanings stashed safely away in the hold – Douglass inhabited this space very differently. Standing by the main mast, he began by reading from his *Narrative* – detailing the horrors he had witnessed and been subject to himself as a slave – only to be interrupted and heckled by a handful of American passengers who accused him of lying. In response, Douglass switched to quoting South Carolina's official code of slave laws, detailing the manner in which one's property could be legally dealt with; a development that only further enraged his detractors, who allegedly threatened to throw him overboard should he continue. Douglass would later describe what ensued as a riot, in which small groups of passengers argued loudly with each other. Significantly, it is evident that his detractors were well aware that the ship's location had dramatically shifted the balance of power in Douglass' favour; as evidenced in their reportedly proclaiming, "Oh! I wish I had you in Cuba", seconded by "I wish I had you in New Orleans!" before a third added, "I wish I had him in Savannah!" (Blassingame, 1979, p. 91).

Douglass had delivered lectures to hostile crowds before, and on occasion had been lucky to escape with his life, however aboard a ship he could not run far and was thus reliant upon his fellow passengers and the Captain to come to his aid. In his later recounting of this

dramatic incident, he would single out for praise one apparently very large Irishman by the name of Gough who came to his defence, and the ship's captain who only restored order by threatening the hecklers that 'he would put them in irons' (Blassingame, 1979, p. 92). Having fled to the relative safety of his steerage compartment, Douglass was subsequently invited back to the promenade deck to finish his lecture, after which the Hudson Family (an abolitionist quartet accompanying him on tour) brought the evening to a close on a more celebratory note with renditions of 'God Save the Queen,' 'Yankee Doodle,' 'America' and 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' (Mann, 1896; McKivigan, 2009). Douglass would later claim that this particular moment of interconnection, negotiation and contestation was truly transformative for him, and incredibly significant given his belief that it represented his first tangible experience of what he was fighting for; a vision in microcosm of a future American society in which the democratic rights of the majority held sway and the colour of one's skin no longer mattered.

## Dublin

After arriving in Liverpool and then making the short journey across the Irish Sea to the port of Kingstown, Douglass informed Garrison on 1 September 1845, that he was 'now safe in old Ireland' (McKivigan, 2009, p. 47). He and his white abolitionist colleague and travelling companion, James Buffum, had been welcomed into the Dublin home of Richard D. Webb, a Quaker and co-founder of HASS who by profession was a printer who had agreed to publish a further edition of Douglass' autobiography. On 3 September, Douglass delivered his first public abolitionist lecture in the Irish capital at the Royal Exchange, a grand public venue that HASS often utilized in the hope that it might enable them to overcome the sectarian divisions in the city. Dublin's population then numbered approximately 200,000 individuals, one-quarter of whom were Protestants and constituted the professional and merchant classes, while the remaining three quarters were Roman Catholics and mostly working class (Dickson, 2014). Douglass had arrived in Ireland incidentally when the island's population was at its peak; totalling approximately 8 million individuals, the overwhelming majority of whom were Roman Catholic tenant farmers whose livelihood was completely dependent on a potato crop that was now showing signs of blight. Over the course of the next 50 years, emigration and death resulting from starvation and disease would reduce the island's population by almost half (Miller, 1985).

On the subject of abolitionism, this Roman Catholic population was then highly suspicious of its evangelical Protestant character, and instead were far more supportive of O'Connell's LRNA campaign to repeal the Act of Union. Irish Protestants and Quakers on the other hand were wary of what they considered to be dangerous revolutionary elements within the Repeal movement. As a result, there were relatively few individuals at the time of Douglass' visit who publicly supported both abolitionism *and* Repeal, although two notable exceptions were another cofounder of HASS, James Haughton, and of course Daniel O'Connell himself. It was into this deeply sectarian terrain therefore, that Douglass ventured in early September; delivering two lectures advocating abolitionism at the Royal Exchange in which he spent an hour on each occasion detailing the horrific treatment of slaves that he had personally witnessed and experienced, during which he was 'most enthusiastically cheered throughout' (*Freeman's Journal*, 1845a). While it is difficult to ascertain from newspaper reporting if the sectarian divide had indeed been successfully overcome on either occasion, the manner in

which Douglass' speeches were favourably spoken of in the *Freeman's Journal* does suggest it may well have been, especially considering the fact that this publication was popular amongst Irish Roman Catholics. For example, the newspaper reported that '[w]hen he spoke of O'Connell as the admired of all who loved liberty and hated oppression, the assembly rose and expressed their hearty approval of the noble course pursued by the Liberator in several rounds of applause' (*Freeman's Journal*, 1845a).

Following his two appearances at the Royal Exchange, Douglass' two subsequent public lectures were in the more humble environs of a Quaker meeting house in Temple Bar. Here however, on the evening of 9 September, Douglass' thinly veiled references to Repeal were not quite as well received; it being reported that when he advocated in favour of 'liberty for all – for the black man, as well as the white man', the applause this elicited was 'promptly suppressed, because of the place in which the meeting was held' (*Freeman's Journal*, 1845b). In his second appearance, he makes no further mention of O'Connell or Repeal, and instead sharpens his abolitionist argument considerably; lambasting the manner in which American Methodists (such as his master) used the bible to justify slaveholding. Speaking as a Methodist himself, here Douglass implored those Methodists in attendance to exert pressure on their American counterparts to also renounce the institution. By going so far as to reportedly question the very Christian credentials of American Methodists however, Douglass nonetheless appears to have here overstepped the bounds of what could be voiced in a Quaker meeting house, with it being reported that '[e]ven in a place of worship the audience had much difficulty in restraining their feelings, as Mr. Douglas presented these truths to them in glowing and eloquent words' (*Evening Packet*, 1845). His line of reasoning in fact so incensed those Methodists in attendance – who in turn blamed their Quaker hosts – that they in turn subsequently banned Douglass from ever speaking at their venue again. The controversy was duly reported upon in the Dublin press, with Webb very publicly disagreeing with the course of action taken by his fellow Quakers, however the furor only appears to have increased Douglass' visibility in the city – something that his host took full advantage of by booking him to subsequently appear at the much larger Music Hall on Lower Abbey Street (Harrison, 1993; McKivigan, 2009).

While in Dublin, Douglass was eager to convey to various audiences the remarkable personal transformation he was experiencing by virtue of no longer experiencing daily racial discrimination. He did this through both his oratory and his letter writing, arguing that it all began quite dramatically abroad the *Cambria*. In a letter penned to Garrison on 10 October, for example, intended for later publication in *The Liberator*, he states that:

One of the most pleasing features of my visit, thus far, has been a total absence of all manifestations of prejudice against me, on account of my color. The change of circumstances, in this, is particularly striking. I go on stagecoaches, omnibuses, steamboats, into the first cabins, and in the first public houses, without seeing the slightest manifestation of that hateful and vulgar feeling against me. I find myself not treated as a *color*, but as a *man* – not as a thing, but as a child of the common Father of us all. (*Liberator*, 1845a)

It was in this context that Douglass, working with his host and publisher Webb, made a number of revisions to his *Narrative* before publishing 2000 copies of what would be the first of two Irish variant editions in September 1845. Although long overlooked in favour of what is considered the definitive first edition published in Boston earlier that year, these Irish variants are significant for their reworked prefaces and appendices. For example, the first contains an additional preface in which Douglass introduces himself and explains his

reasons for having left the US; something that scholars point to as being the first occasion in American history that a slave narrator subverts the literary custom of being first introduced by a white abolitionist (Ripley, 1985).

In their argument that greater attention be paid to the geographies and histories of books, Ogborn and Withers (2010) urge scholars to consider the impact of local places on their production, distribution and consumption. In this regard therefore, it is important to note that while Douglass' *Narrative* was very much a product of his life in Massachusetts, and while he was not embedded *enough* in his new Dublin environs that it might now be considered a product of that context, he was arguably nonetheless clearly emboldened by the new-found freedoms he was experiencing, so as to break from tradition and pen his own preface. Furthermore, Douglass was arguably drawn to Dublin not solely because it was a key node in the Atlantic abolitionist network, but also to harness a crucial technology in the possession of HASS, namely a printing press enabling the mass production of a material object contesting the meaning of slavery, namely his *Narrative*.

In tracing Douglass' path through Ireland, perhaps *the* personal highlight of his time in Dublin occurred on 29 September, when he accompanied Haughton and Buffum to an LNRA rally at Conciliation Hall – where he admits to being 'completely captivated' by none other than Daniel O'Connell himself, who delivered a speech championing both Irish Roman Catholic emancipation and abolitionism (*Liberator*, 1845b). Now an elder statesman and in failing health owing to his recent imprisonment by British colonial authorities, and with his constitutional nationalist strategy being openly questioned by younger and more radical LRNA members, O'Connell was not the force of old (Sim, 2013). Nonetheless Douglass was anxious to personally witness his oratory, and following his speech moved closer to the platform, where he was introduced to Daniel O'Connell's son, Mr. John O'Connell (MP). Douglass was then asked to offer a few impromptu words on the subject of abolitionism to the audience, later informing Garrison that he 'managed to say something, which was quite well received' (*Liberator*, 1845b). Witnessing Daniel O'Connell address that meeting and briefly sharing a stage with him would have a lasting effect on Douglass; something he would attest to some 40 years later in recounting that O'Connell introduced him to the audience as 'the black O'Connell of America', and that '[i]t was my privilege to see the man and to stand upon the platform of Conciliation Hall with him' (Douglass, 1886). Beyond this one impromptu speech however, there is no evidence that Douglass had any further contact with the Repeal movement, nor that he and O'Connell spent any further time in each other's company, despite their mutual admiration.

## Cork

Douglass departed Dublin in early October, accompanied by Buffum and their host Webb; the small party travelling south via stagecoach to the towns of Wexford and Waterford where Douglass spoke on the evenings of 8 and 9 October, respectively, before continuing west to Cork, another Atlantic port city and key node in the transatlantic abolitionist network. Here Webb entrusted his two guests to Thomas Jennings, a prosperous merchant and member of the Cork chapter of HASS. On 14 October, Douglass delivered his first lecture at the City Courthouse before the mayor and 'over one hundred ladies and a large audience of respectable gentlemen and citizens generally' (*Cork Examiner*, 1845a). Here, he continued to espouse 'moral suasion' and to chastise organized religion, for example, stating that 'the American

pulpit is on the side of slavery, and the Bible is blasphemously quoted in support of it' (Blassingame, 1979, p. 42). Given the secular nature of the venue, Douglass again alludes to Repeal – so as to encourage Roman Catholics likely in the audience to also support abolitionism – while continuing to remain careful not to appear to openly endorse it himself. For example, he is reported as stating to great cheers, that:

Indignant denunciations against American slavery... have wafted across the Atlantic ... [but] have never yet awakened in Ireland an adequate expression of feeling and sympathy ... We see the power of public opinion on political injustice or legislation at home; let it be exerted for the removal of personal slavery abroad, and it will be omnipotent. (*Cork Examiner*, 1845a)

Three days later, on 17 October, Douglass delivered another abolitionist address at a far less secular venue, namely a Methodist Wesleyan Chapel on the city's main thoroughfare, in which he offered a damning critique of the country of his birth. Developing a more political argument for abolitionism than he had done previously, here he denounced Americans for having abandoned the spirit of the Constitution by failing to uphold the 'principle of universal freedom' upon which the self-proclaimed 'land of liberty' had been founded, something he elaborated upon by reading recent descriptions of slaves being advertised as property for sale in the newspapers of southern states (*Cork Examiner*, 1845b). In lambasting American Methodists again for their support of slavery and his imploring those present to pressure their brethren across the ocean to abandon the institution, Douglass' continued attentiveness to his immediate environs is again evident, in addition to his attempting to commandeer any other transatlantic networks they were embedded in. To this end, he provided graphic and horrific personal testimony of how his master treated slaves and how his faith supported his actions, before lampooning the hypocrisy of a church founded by John Wesley (who had denounced slavery) that now endorsed the institution.

Despite returning to his seat 'amid loud applause', Douglass was nonetheless here called to account by a number of Methodist reverends in attendance, who were incensed not that he had questioned their faith in their own place of worship, but rather that he had done so three days previous at the City Courthouse (*Cork Examiner*, 1845b). In addressing Douglass, the Reverend Mr. Mackey, for example, commented that his previous speech

was calculated to cast opprobrium on Methodists in particular, whilst the Roman Catholic and other sects were passed by; and he need scarcely remark that the majority of the audience at that meeting was composed of persons who required but little incentive to induce them to cast opprobrium on their sect. (*Cork Examiner*, 1845b)

Again, in 'tracing' Douglass' journey and paying closer attention to the range of Irish locations in which he spoke, it is clear that rather than stumbling through a sectarian minefield, he was in fact an astute reader of his specific environs and that he tailored his speeches accordingly. He knowingly hints at this in his humorous defence to the reverends' charges, with it being reported (much to the delight of the crowd) that he plead his innocence, stating that 'he was a fallible man; and it would be requiring too much that he should know men's religion by their faces' (*Cork Examiner*, 1845b).

The following week, Douglass and Buffum parted ways, arranging to rendezvous in Belfast in December, and leaving Douglass in the meantime to his own devices. Like many Methodists, Douglass abstained from alcohol and was a strong supporter of the temperance movement, and so availed of the opportunity to meet Father Mathew in Cork and to advocate for abolitionism at CTAS events. By 1845 however, much like the cause of Repeal, Father Mathew's campaign had also lost much of its momentum. While it had briefly succeeded in ridding



Irish society of public drunkenness and thus refuting colonial stereotypes of the Roman Catholic population, the organization now struggled financially, so much so that millions of individuals who had once taken the total abstinence pledge had now deserted the cause (Townend, 2002). Nonetheless, Rodgers (2007) contends that Douglass saw opportunity here to broaden his abolitionist audience beyond his usual evangelical Protestant crowd. Writing to Garrison, for example, on 28 October, Douglass states that ‘I am hailed here as a temperance man as well as an abolitionist’ (*Liberator*, 1845c). He goes on to describe a soirée held in his honour by Father Mathew, where he took the total abstinence pledge and recounted that

[e]veryone seemed to be enjoying himself in the fullest manner ... Among them all, I saw no one that seemed to be shocked or disturbed at my dark presence. No one seemed to feel himself contaminated by contact with me. (*Liberator*, 1845c)

Douglass appears to have greatly enjoyed himself on these occasions, and in the reporting of his speeches it is significant to note that here he reaches across the sectarian divide to advocate abolitionism to the Roman Catholic working classes who would not likely have been exposed to the cause otherwise. This is evident, for example, in a speech Douglass delivered at St. Patrick’s Temperance Hall on 20 October, where again he alludes to Repeal in his reportedly proclaiming that not only had teetotalism been integral to his proving his humanity, but that ‘if we could but make the world sober, we would have no slavery’; and also that ‘[a]ll great reforms go together’ (Blassingame, 1979, p. 58).

Douglass left Cork in early November 1845, but during the course of just six weeks in the city had given at least nine public lectures, and another in the nearby town of Youghal (*Liberator*, 1845d). In continuing to trace Douglass’ movements, it is evident that he continues his expert negotiation here of a treacherous sectarian terrain, while also displaying an acute awareness of the high degree of interconnectedness linking these Irish Atlantic port cities to the US. This is evidenced by his increasingly tailoring his speeches not only to his immediate audience, but also to an American one whom he is confident will later read his oratory in print. Realizing the power of the press in this regard, on 20 October, for example, he states that ‘[m]y words, feeble as they are when spoken at home, will wax stronger in proportion to the distance I go from home, as a lever gains power by its distance from the fulcrum’ (Blassingame, 1979, p. 59). Furthermore, in bidding farewell to the people of Cork on 3 November, he not only thanks them for their hospitality but also praises the city’s journalists, who duly reported that ‘[b]y means of the press, his words would be borne across the Atlantic, and startle the slaveholders in their cruelty and wickedness’ (*Southern Reporter*, 1845). Here Douglass advocates a re-envisioning of the Atlantic Ocean, not as a space that divides societies but rather as one that increasingly connects them, and consequently not as barrier to achieving abolitionist goals but rather, a space crisscrossed with strands of opportunity. Only by adopting an Atlantic perspective as a style of inquiry, by ‘tracing’ Douglass and paying close attention to his reading of various contexts and the manner in which they were interconnected, is it possible to reveal this history of political activity being forged relationally, long occluded by state-centric nationalist narratives.

## Limerick

From Cork, Douglass travelled north to Limerick before eventually making his way to Belfast; two more Atlantic Irish nodes in the abolitionist network, albeit aligned with the



non-Garrisonian British & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS). Despite this detail, Douglass nonetheless appears to have pragmatically refused to let it derail him from his abolitionist mission. Unlike HASS however, BFASS does not appear to have been quite so concerned with overcoming the sectarian divisions in Irish society, as evidenced by the fact that Douglass would now remain overwhelmingly in Protestant evangelical company for the remainder of his time in Ireland. In Limerick therefore, Douglass delivered two lectures at the Independent Chapel, in the first of which (titled 'Slavery and America's Bastard Republicanism on 10 November') he again advanced a more politicized abolitionist argument than was customary for Garrisonians; castigating Americans for their continued support of slavery, and arguing this proved the US was not yet a real democracy (*Limerick Reporter*, 1845a). Although Douglass continues to allude to the cause of Repeal, he now argues a crucial distinction between the two causes, namely that there is in fact very little similarity between the plight of American slaves and that of Irish Roman Catholics. For example, on 10 November, Douglass' speech was reported as follows:

He had been met with the objection that slavery existed in Ireland, and that therefore there was no necessity for describing its character as found in another country (hear, hear). His answer was, that if slavery existed here, it ought to be put down, and the generous in the land ought to rise and scatter its fragments to the winds (loud cheers). – But there was nothing like American slavery on the soil on which he now stood. Negro-slavery consisted not in taking away a man's property, but in making property of him, and in destroying his identity – in treating him as the beasts and creeping things. (*Limerick Reporter*, 1845a)

After having taken the podium on one further occasion at the Independent Chapel, in which he again implicated American Methodists, Independents and Presbyterians in the crime of slavery, Douglass made his final public appearance in Limerick at an exclusive anti-slavery soiree held in his honor on the evening of 21 November, at which it was reported '[h]e was happy to see that not only the humble classes of Limerick recognized him, but its wealth and respectability' (*Limerick Reporter*, 1845b). Here Douglass again publicly discussed his own remarkable self-transformation having crossed the Atlantic, counter-posing the freedom he was now happily experiencing under a monarchy with that of his previous life in Massachusetts. It was a line of reasoning again clearly designed to appeal to the overwhelmingly Protestant audience present before him, but also to resonate with the American one he knew would likely read his comments later. In closing he thanked the people of Limerick, before toasting not only the health of the Mayor but also Queen Victoria, before singing a 'beautiful sentimental air' and returning to his seat amid loud applause (*Limerick Reporter*, 1845b).

## **Belfast, and beyond**

From Limerick, Douglass returned briefly to Dublin before venturing north to Belfast, where the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society had arranged for him to deliver seven public lectures. These commenced at the Independent Meetinghouse on Donegall Street on the evening of 5 December, where by way of introduction, he again recounted his life story to date – now featuring his *Cambria* experience as a dramatic first illustration of the freedom he was now experiencing having crossed the Atlantic. Before a likely predominantly Protestant audience that included the Mayor, here Douglass thanked the people of Belfast for their support of abolitionism, before proceeding to again firmly distinguish between the plight of American

slaves and Irish Roman Catholics. Furthermore, Douglass refers to O'Connell and the cause of Repeal in a notably far less ambiguous manner than he had done so previously in Dublin and Cork, for example, it being reported that:

He did not pretend to speak of O'Connell in connexion (sic) with any other subject than that of the one before him, but he had heard his name denounced by the tyrants of America, and his efforts spoken of in such a manner as made the slave's heart leap for joy. (*Banner of Ulster*, 1845)

The following day, Douglass wrote to his publisher Webb to inform him that he had now sold the entire initial run of 2000 copies of the Irish edition of his autobiography, stating '[w]ell all my books went last night at one blow. I want more. I want more. I have everything to hope and – nothing to fear' (McKivigan, 2009, p. 70). According to Webb, Douglass earned approximately \$750 from this first Irish edition, solely from selling copies at the venues where he spoke (Harrison, 1993). Rather than print more copies of this first Irish edition of his *Narrative* however, Douglass corresponded with Webb to arrange publication of a second variant edition. Published subsequently in Dublin in early 1846, it contained a yet further revised preface in which Douglass crafted a dialogue between himself and an American pro-slavery advocate, utilizing an exchange of letters from his time in Ireland; a development that Ferreira (2001, p. 60) contends 'demonstrates his assertion of command over his own destiny'. Again, while Douglass did not change the substance of his *Narrative*, the fact that he is taking more control over it, arguably points to the significant development of his agency as an abolitionist while in Ireland, a result of the profound impact the place was having on him, as he himself repeatedly confessed.

In utilizing the 'trace' as an approach with which to ascertain the degree to which Ireland influenced Douglass, what is particularly evident is his expert tailoring of his abolitionist argument according to his reading of the likely sectarian composition of his audience. The fact that he adopted such tactics, Douglass would openly admit to himself on 9 December, before a crowded Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on Donegall Square, with it being reported his proclaiming that

he was determined to expose the different churches in America which were the abettors of slavery, and he would take the opportunity of speaking of the church which went by the name of the place in which he was delivering his lecture. (*Belfast News-Letter*, 1845a)

True to his word, and speaking subsequently at the Presbyterian Church on Rosemary Street on two occasions, Douglass declared that American Presbyterians were unworthy of being called Christians, while again pleading with his audience that they pressure their American brethren to renounce slavery. In his subsequent lecture on 23 December, Douglass denounced the Free Church of Scotland in particular, with whom his Presbyterian audience had close ties, for receiving 3000 pounds sterling from their brethren in South Carolina, arguing that they should 'send back the blood-stained money' (*Belfast News-Letter*, 1845b). In response to his plea, the streets of Belfast were reportedly subsequently placarded with signs that read 'Send back the Nigger', however the controversy again only appears to have created greater publicity for his abolitionist cause (Harrison, 1993; Rolston, 2003).

While in Ireland, Douglass had repeatedly and very publicly pointed to his metamorphosis, and this was something he also continued to speak of in letters penned to Garrison, intended for later American publication in *The Liberator*. For example, writing from Belfast on New Year's Day 1846, he states, 'I can truly say, I have spent some of the happiest moments of my life since landing in this country. I seem to have undergone a transformation. I live a new life' (*Liberator*, 1846a). Douglass goes on to detail the manner in which he has been widely

welcomed in Ireland, again contrasting his previous life in a republic with that now under the control of a monarchy. In so doing, Douglass invokes a particular phrase that Garrison had used to describe him four years previously at Faneuil Hall:

But now behold the change! Eleven days and a half gone, and I have crossed three thousand miles of the perilous deep. Instead of a democratic government, I am under a monarchical government. Instead of the bright blue sky of America, I am covered with the soft grey fog of the Emerald Isle. I breathe, and lo! the chattel becomes a man. (*Liberator*, 1846a)

After delivering his final speech in Ireland at a public breakfast held in his honor by the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society on 6 January 1846, Douglass crossed the Irish Sea to continue his lecture tour in Scotland. From this vantage point, he would suddenly provide a very different perspective on his Irish experiences. For example, writing to Garrison from Montrose on 26 February, in a letter he again knew would likely be published in the *Liberator*, Douglass describes quite harrowing scenes of destitution he had witnessed in Ireland, that in his own words made him 'blush, and hang my head to think myself a man' (*Liberator*, 1846b). In recounting his time in Dublin, he confesses 'I speak truly when I say I dreaded to go out of the house. The streets were almost literally alive with beggars' (*Liberator*, 1846b). In continuing, he describes heart-wrenching scenes of being surrounded by abandoned starving children who were met with indifference on the city streets, and of

[w]omen, barefooted and bareheaded, and only covered by rags which seemed to be held together by the very dirt and filth with which they were covered – many of these had infants in their arms, whose emaciated forms, sunken eyes and pallid cheeks, told too plainly that they had nursed till they had nursed in vain. (*Liberator*, 1846b)

It is possible that Douglass was here witnessing not only extreme social inequality along sectarian lines in the colonial capital, but a situation exacerbated by the impact of the potato blight, which caused a partial harvest failure in 1845, likely triggering migration from rural areas into Irish Atlantic port cities. Significantly, despite the fact that Douglass had increasingly distinguished between the plight of American slaves and Irish Roman Catholics, in particular when addressing Protestant audiences, having departed the island he now offers a revised perspective. In recounting a visit to a typical mud-walled and thatched dwelling in the Irish countryside, for example, he states that 'of all places to witness human misery, ignorance, degradation, filth and wretchedness, an Irish hut is pre-eminent', and that the inhabitants of such dwellings exist 'in much the same degradation as the American slaves [and that] I see much here to remind me of my former condition' (*Liberator*, 1846b).

It is unlikely that Douglass decided to publicly share this very different perspective on Ireland in the hope that Irish Roman Catholics or Irish Americans might support abolitionism, and much more likely that he was presenting himself as a man who felt sympathy for others and who had a broader vision of suffering beyond his own plight and that of his fellow slaves. For example, Douglass states that:

[T]hough I am more closely connected and identified with one class of outraged, oppressed and enslaved people, I cannot allow myself to be insensible to the wrongs and sufferings of any part of the great family of man. I am not only an American slave, but a man, and as such, am bound to use my powers for the welfare of the whole human brotherhood. I am not going through this land with my eyes shut, ears stopped, or heart steeled. (*Liberator*, 1846b)

Such Irish experiences therefore appear to weigh heavily on Douglass, likely owing to his dramatic and sudden elevation in social stature while in the colony – something he repeatedly celebrated from the podium but which obviously came at a deeply troubling personal

cost. Having traced Douglass' Irish journey however, it is clear that rather than risk alienating his Irish Protestant hosts, he clearly believed it prudent that he should keep such thoughts on the matter private until he left the island. What is interesting however, is that although Douglass here comes his closest to openly sympathizing with the plight of Irish Roman Catholics, he concludes by blaming alcohol for their predicament rather than finding any fault with British colonialism; arguing that '[t]he *immediate*, and it may be the main cause of the extreme poverty and beggary in Ireland, is intemperance' (*Liberator*, 1846b).

## Conclusions

In 'tracing' Douglass' Irish journey and by engaging in a more geographically sensitive consideration of his oratory during this brief but significant period in his life, a more complex character emerges than that recently evoked by scholars and Presidents alike. While there is little evidence to suggest he unified the causes of abolitionism and Roman Catholic emancipation, nor that he was ever embedded *enough* in any Irish locality to be seriously swayed by local concerns, the 'trace' reveals not only how Douglass was influenced by a general sense of freedom while in Ireland, but also just how aware he was of his immediate context – as illustrated by his adept negotiation of religious spaces and astute management of the sectarian and class divisions then prevalent in that society. In this regard, the methodical manner in which he managed to stay 'above the fray' is remarkable; tailoring his abolitionist argument according to the sectarian character of the audience before him, careful to only allude to the cause of Repeal at secular venues, and increasingly willing to differentiate between the plight of Irish Roman Catholics and American slaves when in the company of Irish Protestants. By adopting Atlantic history as a style of inquiry, it is also clearly evident that Douglass was traveling through Irish nodes enmeshed in various transatlantic networks, and that he hoped to harness those networks to further the goal of abolitionism. Douglass therefore often addressed dual audiences; the specific denomination of the one that sat before him, and the American one whom he trusted would later read his words in print. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy that he chose not to draw the attention of his immediate audiences to the widespread destitution that he was witnessing outside the venues in which he spoke, and in which they were arguably more deeply implicated than slavery, instead remaining resolutely focused on the cause of abolitionism. This was a world therefore of political activity being forged relationally, and through networks, flows and circulations since occluded by nationalist narratives and their territorializing imperatives. However, this world and Douglass' place in it is today arguably deserving of recovery, given its enormous potential to serve as a 'usable past'; one that might aid in the struggle to forge more tolerant multi-cultural societies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, especially in the very Atlantic port cities that he visited.

In conclusion therefore, it is evident that navigating the high road through a struggle is never easy, and that Douglass clearly carried the weight of millions of American slaves on his shoulders; a burden that required him to hold his nose and to cover his eyes at times, so as to remain focused on overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds. For both his Irish audiences and for those who would later read his words across the Atlantic World, Ireland had to remain a relatively unproblematic region of the UK, despite his accruing dramatic evidence to the contrary. Only then could Douglass contrast the freedom he was experiencing under a monarchy with that he had failed to experience in 'the land of the free'. It was a

rhetoical device simply too powerful to let reality intrude upon it, and this in particular speaks volumes of Douglass' adroitness, his immutability and a remarkable degree of *savoir faire* – all of which he clearly honed in Ireland and which would prove to be his most invaluable assets.

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