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Beyond the Pale
Frederick Douglass in Cork

LEE JENKINS

> No one . . . seemed to be shocked or disturbed at my dark presence. No one seemed to feel himself contaminated by contact with me. I think it would be difficult to get the same number of persons together in any of our New England cities, without some democratic nose growing deformed at my approach. *But then you know white people in America are whiter, purer, and better than the people here. This accounts for it!*
>
> Frederick Douglass, describing a soirée hosted in his honour by Father Mathew, in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison, Cork, 28 October 1845 (Foner 5.7).

The American ex-slave Frederick Douglass visited Cork in the autumn of 1845 as an antislavery lecturer. Douglass's presence here offers a valuable perspective on local history, while, in a wider sense, his Irish sojourn suggests points of cross-reference, but also equally significant oppositions and partings of the ways, between Ireland and black America in the mid-nineteenth century.

Frederick Douglass was born into Maryland slavery in 1818; after his escape to the relative freedom of the North in 1838, he lectured on antislavery – and on temperance, women's rights and racism; he edited newspapers, advised presidents, served as US consul-general to Haiti; and he wrote three versions of his life story. It was the publication in 1845 of the first of his autobiographies – *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself* – which prompted Douglass to cross the Atlantic to Ireland and Britain. The *Narrative*, which ends with an account of Douglass's discovery of his vocation as an antislavery orator, was written to refute allegations that, as an orator, Douglass was an impostor, that it was impossible that a young man who was removed from slavery by only a few

years could display the linguistic and rhetorical dexterity which Douglass displayed in his speeches on behalf of the American Anti-Slavery Society. In refuting such allegations, Douglass had to prove his authenticity as an ex-slave, and to do this his *Narrative* gives details of names, dates and places, disclosures which made his recapture a very real danger, even a probability – hence Douglass's self-exile in Ireland and Britain between 1845 and 1847.

Douglass crossed the Atlantic in 1845 on the newly built Cunard ship the *Cambria*, and was forced to travel in steerage. He returned to America in 1847 on the same ship, subject to the same discrimination on the grounds of colour, and the row that ensued forced the Cunard management to apologize publicly in the press for the racist treatment Douglass had received. Douglass insisted that 'the like . . . has never since occurred on board the steamships of the Cunard line' – although Cunard policy seems not to have substantively changed as a result of the *contretemps*, since 'a sympathetic fellow traveller', William Makepeace Thackeray, complained about discrimination against blacks on Cunard ships in the 1850s (Douglass 388; Lorimer 48; Loggins 39).

On board the *Cambria* in 1845, an incident occurred which anticipated the success of his Irish antislavery tour, when Douglass was supported by an Irishman against the taunts and the threatened violence of Southern proslavery passengers. The *Limerick Reporter* of 11 November 1845 reports Douglass's account of this shipboard incident as follows:

> There happened to be an Irishman present from Dublin whose name was Gough; . . . It was remarkable, that not a man of the slaveholders wished to have [Mr Douglass] in Ireland, for they knew he would get fair play there (hear, and cheers), and when the fellow threatened to throw him overboard, he was told by this Irishman that two might play at that game . . . [Mr. Douglass] then called for three cheers for old Ireland.

Douglass found 'fair play' in Ireland – and, more than that, he seems also to have found the full complement of his selfhood here. When he arrived in Ireland in the autumn of 1845, Douglass stated in a letter home, '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' (Douglass 373). The impetus behind this regeneration stems in part from Douglass's characteristic and strategic emphasis on the paradox of finding greater liberty in Europe than in the supposed Land of the Free – '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-gray fog of the Emerald Isle. I breathe, and lo! the chattel becomes a man' (Douglass 374). Yet Douglass's Irish 'rebirth' resonates beyond his immediate abolitionist

agenda, and compares in striking ways with the experience of other visitors to Ireland. Trollope, for instance, in Ireland as Post Office surveyor also in the 1840s, stated 'From the day I set foot in Ireland all . . . evils went away from me' (Foster 291).

Douglass's position, though, was obviously different in kind: calling himself, as the *Belfast News Letter* of January 1846 reports, 'a refugee abroad, an outlaw at home', Douglass said in a letter to William Garrison dated 1 January 1846 that in 'speaking of Ireland, I shall be influenced by no prejudices in favor of America . . . I have no end to serve, no creed to uphold, no government to defend; and as to nation, I belong to none.' Yet as spokesman for black America, a colonised nation within a nation, Douglass could make common cause with colonial Ireland and *its* spokesman, Daniel O'Connell. Douglass had admired O'Connell and 'his truly wondrous eloquence' since his days in slavery, when speeches in favour of Catholic Emancipation by O'Connell and Curran had been among the self-educated Douglass's first reading matter. 'The reading of these documents,' Douglass said, 'enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery.'[1]

In Dublin on 29 September 1845, at a rally for Repeal, Douglass shared the platform of Conciliation Hall with O'Connell – and there are chimes of a common vocabulary between the abolitionist rhetoric of Douglass and the liberation rhetoric of mid nineteenth-century Ireland: where O'Connell argued for Repeal of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland, Garrisonian abolitionists (of whom Douglass was one in 1845) insisted that slavery in the American South necessitated the break-up of the Union of the American states; O'Connell was known as the Liberator, and William Lloyd Garrison's American antislavery paper was called the *Liberator.* Douglass used the phrase 'black Ireland' to refer to *both* disaffected blacks *and* disaffected Irish in America; both O'Connell and Douglass appropriated Byron's words, 'Hereditary bondsmen, know you not,/Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow', and Douglass repeated O'Connell's injunction to 'Agitate! Agitate!' (Blassingame V.118; Cusack 112; Huggins 180). 'In 1835 [O'Connell] had called for a black O'Connell who would 'AGITATE AGITATE until his fellow sufferers learned their strength' – and common cause with O'Connell shades into identification, when in his autobiography of 1881, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, Douglass remembers how, at the Dublin Repeal rally in 1845, O'Connell 'called me the 'Black O'Connell of the United States'; 'nor did he let the occasion pass without his usual word of denunciation of our slave system' (Fladeland 350; Blassingame V.275).[2] For his part, O'Connell was dubbed 'this Irish Caliban' by the slaveholders of the American South (Temperley 227).

In his 'Farewell [Address] to the British People' in 1847, Douglass quoted O'Connell when he applied to the plight of the African American slave O'Connell's words about the history of Ireland, a history which 'may be traced, like the track of a wounded man through a crowd' (Blassingame II.27). In the 1960s, Martin Luther King would quote the words Douglass had taken from O'Connell to describe black American experience. The 1920s, too, had suggested common currency between demonstrations of Irish and black American nationhood: Alain Locke, architect of the Harlem Renaissance, held up the Irish Literary Revival as his model; while Marcus Garvey's black nationalist ideology was rooted in his study of Irish Republicanism. Garvey vigorously joined the campaign to support IRA prisoner and Mayor of Cork Terence MacSwiney, who died on hunger strike in 1920, no doubt comforted by the fact that Garvey had assured him – on what authority is uncertain – of the 'sympathy of 400,000,000 negroes' (Dooley 22). Douglass himself, late in his life, supported Parnell and lobbied in Washington for Irish Home Rule.

Correspondences like these may be suggestive, yet it is, of course, right to warn, as Luke Gibbons does, against 'a simplistic equation of the plight of the native Irish with that of the black population in the Southern states of the USA' (Gibbons 97). Frederick Douglass himself, in his Irish lectures and afterwards, repeatedly warned against facile identifications of Irish and black American experience, insisting, in 1850, that 'there is no analogy between the two cases' (Blassingame II.258–9). Douglass thought there were better grounds for comparing the troubled history of Ireland with that of Haiti (Blassingame IV.606,V.527), a comparison foregrounded in Henry Stratford Persse's account of Ireland in 1822, as

> a regular war between the oppressors and the oppressed . . . In Mrs Connolly's paper (she writing with a muffled pen) compares this war to the insurrection of the Blacks and calls Ireland a second Hispaniola or St Domingo and it is true, for there human beings were put to death like wild beasts while the conflict lasted between the slaves and the slave owners (Pethica and Roy 68).

Equations between the lot of the Irish and the lot of the American slave were, however, made quite regularly by the Irish press during Douglass's visit: the *Waterford Freeman* 10 September 1845, for instance, used Douglass's visit to the town to talk of of 'the white slaves of Ireland'; the *Limerick Reporter* tells us, on 11 November 1845, that

> [Douglass] 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. His answer was, that if slavery

> existed here, it ought to be put down . . . But there was nothing like American slavery on the soil on which he now stood.

The Belfast *Banner of Ulster*, 9 December 1845, reports Douglass's feeling that Irish people did not always 'sufficiently distinguish between certain forms of oppression and slavery'. The *Cork Examiner* 15 October 1845, reports Douglass's insistence that 'I stand before you . . . a slave. A slave not in the ordinary sense of the term, but in its real and intrinsic meaning.'

Irish equations of the domestic condition with the condition of slavery were appropriated from 'the rhetoric of [British] radicalism during the 1780s', when 'Almost without exception, radicals linked their own plight to that of slaves' (Oldfield 33). For Henry Stratford Persse, the Ireland of the 1820s was 'this Island of Slaves' while America was 'the Land of the Free'.[3] But come the 1840s, many Irish resisted even metaphorical equations between their lot and that of the American slave. Douglass came to Ireland in 1845, at the onset of the Great Famine. He mentions Irish poverty and suffering in a letter to Garrison, and he refers explicitly to the famine in his second autobiography, the 1855 *My Bondage and My Freedom*, when he says, of slave songs, that 'I have never heard any songs like those anywhere since I left slavery, except when in Ireland. There I heard the same *wailing notes*, and was much affected by them. It was during the famine of 1845–6' (Douglass 184). The fact that Douglass never mentions the famine in the public addresses he made in Ireland in 1845 has led more than one of his biographers to accuse him of blaming Irish distress on drunkenness (McFeely 126).[4] Yet although William Makepeace Thackeray could talk of the 'livid ghastly face' 'of the popular starvation' in Cork in 1842, 'No one knew that when the potato crop failed during the early autumn of 1845 Ireland was to be faced with something more than another periodic food shortage' (Thackeray 83; Morash 3). An item relating to Douglass in the Cork *Constitution* of 21 October 1845 is immediately followed by an item titled 'THE POTATO CROP' which concludes 'We ourselves receive the most conflicting accounts [of potato blight] even respecting the same districts.' The full impact of food shortages in the autumn of 1845 – when Douglass was in the south and west of Ireland – 'would not be felt until the following spring and summer' (Kinealy 55).

Douglass's reaction to its early indications notwithstanding, the mass Irish emigration to America in which the Famine would subsequently result represented 'a serious dilemma for the anti slavery movement', and made acute the problem that American abolitionists already faced, that the vast majority of Irish-Americans were, if not actively proslavery, then antipathetic to the antislavery cause, and hostile to attempts on the part of abolitionists to make common cause between the American slave and the Irish American immigrant – as O'Connell found to his cost when American Repeal societies

couldn't reconcile his nationalism with his abolitionist beliefs (Osofsky 889, 906). The support of antislavery MPs in the British parliament for Catholic Emancipation in 1829 had been reciprocated by Irish votes crucial to the emancipation of slaves in the British dominions in 1833. When Catholic Emancipation had been achieved, and O'Connell's Irish agenda had shifted to Repeal, William Lloyd Garrison argued that antislavery was America's version of Repeal, but race riots in the American North in the 1840s belied the kind of co-operation between Irish and black Americans which Garrison was attempting to promote (Osofsky 899). Irish American response to Garrison is summed up by the *New-England Catholic Reporter* – that he should 'be immediately transported to Ethiopia, there to dwell in love and harmony with the wild negroes' (Osofsky 901).

Frederick Douglass had been preceded as an antislavery lecturer in Ireland by Olaudah Equiano (an ex-slave and an autobiographer who in 1791 spent some eight months lecturing here) and later by the free black American Charles Lenox Remond, who, on his return to America in 1841 brought with him the 'Irish Address,' signed by O'Connell, by Father Theobald Mathew, and 60,000 other Irishmen and women: the Address, reprinted in the *Liberator* on 11 March 1842, urged Irish-Americans 'to love liberty – hate slavery – CLING BY THE ABOLITIONISTS – and in America you will do honour to the name of Ireland'. Similarly, the purpose of Irish antislavery societies was to educate prospective emigrants to America in the ethics of abolition. The Cork newspaper the *Southern Reporter* noted on 21 September 1841 that Remond's exhortation on antislavery 'must be useful to the Anti-Slavery cause in general, but is especially important to us in this locality, whence hundreds of our fellow-countrymen annually Emigrate, to put them on their guard against the seductions of slave-holding cupidity.' But Irish-Americans didn't necessarily want to be singled out as a special interest group in this way – wishing to assimilate into American society, they were wary of causes which appeared to run counter to American patriotism; at the same time, of course, Irish-Americans often competed in the labour market with blacks, competition which would only increase and wages fall should the abolition of slavery unleash vast numbers of ex-slaves onto the open job market. Another factor in Irish-American proslavery was the predominantly Protestant, often evangelical, and sometimes explicitly anti-Catholic belongings of most white abolitionists (even O'Connell denounced Garrison for his antisabbatarianism and his anticlericalism): and the close links between American and English abolitionism – Douglass himself said of England, 'She is still the mother country, and the mother, too, of our abolition movement' – only increased Irish-American suspicion and hostility toward antislavery (Douglass 292).[5]

In Cork in 1845, Douglass had taken the pledge from Father Mathew – who had himself, reputedly, been converted to teetotalism by the Cork Quaker and antislavery agitator Billy Martin – and had given an address on 'Intemperance and Slavery' at Mathew's Temperance Institute in the city (Harrison, 'Cork Anti-Slavery' 74). Remembering *his* visit to Cork in 1842 in his *Irish Sketch Book*, William Makepeace Thackeray cited an old gentleman who 'said that all the fun had gone out of Ireland since Father Mathew banished all the whiskey from it' – and Thackeray received a working demonstration of this, when, the morning after an intemperate night before, he and his fellow revellers came down to breakfast at McDowell's (Imperial) Hotel in search of soda-water as a hangover cure, only to find 'the Apostle of Temperance seated at the table drinking tea' and 'we did not like to ask for the soda-water in such an awful presence as that' (Thackeray 64, 65). Douglass also took breakfast with Mathew after an evening soirée, but because, in Douglass's case, the soirée had been hosted by Mathew himself, there was no need for soda-water – and anyway, Douglass could have found plenty at the home of Thomas Jennings, soda-water manufacturer, with whose family he stayed in Cork.[6] Richard Dowden, Mayor of Cork at the time of Douglass's visit to the city, worked with Jennings, first as an apprentice and then as partner in the business: on his death, Jennings left the business to Dowden, his fellow Unitarian and fellow temperance advocate. A vignette of Dowden as teetotaller is provided by Cork writer Francis Mahony, in his *Reliques of Father Prout*. Mahony's persona, Cork priest Father Prout, calls upon Dowden, 'whom I am sorry to see indulging in nothing but soda all the evening' for a song. 'Dick Dowden's Song,' which follows, makes satirical reference to the connection between Dowden's temperance and his business interests:

> Gin is a lurking viper,
> That stings the maddened soul,
> And reason plays the piper,
> While Folly drains the bowl;
> And rum, made of molasses,
> Inclineth man to sin;
> And fair *potheen* surpasses
> The alcohol of gin.
>
> But purest air in fixture
> Pervades the soda draught,
> And forms the sylph-like mixture
> Brewed by our gentle craft.
> Nor is the beverage injured
> When flavoured with a lime;
> Or if, when slightly gingered,
> 'Tis swallowed off in time
> (Mahony 96–97).[7]

Douglass had, 'from the day of his arrival in Ireland ... found temperance audiences responsive to his combined attacks on liquor and chattel slavery' – yet, although he insisted that '*All great reforms go together*', Douglass was anxious that the issue of slavery should remain uppermost on his Irish agenda, and in his Cork speech on 'Intemperance and Slavery' Douglass relegated intemperance to metaphorical status, when he said, 'if we could but make the world sober, we would have no slavery. *Mankind has been drunk*' (Blassingame I.55, 58). Douglass was not so keen, however, when Mathew later used slavery as metaphor for intemperance, and reneged on his earlier commitment to antislavery. Visiting America in 1849, Mathew refused to speak out against slavery, justifying himself with the argument that 'had he been prevented from visiting the Southern states because of his support for abolitionism, many Irish people in the South would have remained "slaves" to drink' (Kerrigan, 'Irish Temperance' 116).[8] The American correspondent of the *Cork Examiner* agreed with Mathew, arguing on 29 August 1849 that if the Apostle of Temperance had attacked slavery, he would have been rendered 'powerless to help his white slaves.' Douglass's denunciation of Mathew's 'disgraceful apostasy' in his paper the *North Star* on 17 August 1849 was outdone only by that of the New Bedford *Weekly Echo*, which stated that 'Our only wish respecting him now is that he will keep his old priestly carcass out of New Bedford' (Kerrigan, 'Irish Temperance' 110).

Isabel Jennings, Douglass's friend and co-secretary of the Cork Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, apparently approved of the course taken by Mathew in America, telling him in a letter that

> Although I feel that I would gladly lay down my life, were it needed, in the Anti-Slavery cause, yet I also feel that you would injure the Temperance cause were you to devote any of your time to the Anti-Slavery question ...; and if you succeed in destroying intemperance in the Slave States, you lay the axe at the root of slavery

That Isabel Jennings also had misgivings, however, about Mathew's Southern mission is evident from her comment, '*I know you abhor slavery in your heart*, and I trust that its hideousness will not purposely be concealed from you, as is too often done' (Maguire 289, 290). Dublin abolitionist James Haughton was much less equivocal in his censure of Mathew who had 'failed to maintain in the South the noble principles of freedom for the colored race which he had always advocated at home' (Maguire 291n), and thus had typified what Fintan O'Toole describes in the *Irish Times* of 23 January 1998 as the ongoing 'Irish double-think on race'. The tension between Ireland and Irish America over the issue of slavery would again be highlighted a few years later by the controversy created by the Young Irelander John Mitchel, who

was, according to Douglass, another of the many Irish 'who loved liberty for themselves and their country, but were utterly destitute of sympathy with the cause of liberty in countries other than their own' (Douglass 683). In New York city in 1854, in the second issue of his newspaper the *Citizen*, Mitchel responded to a letter from Haughton, urging Mitchel and other Young Irelanders exiled in America to support antislavery. Mitchel, who had himself used slavery as a metaphor for the condition of the Irish under British rule, denied that 'it is a crime, or a wrong or even a peccadillo, to hold slaves, to buy slaves, to sell slaves, to keep slaves to their work by flogging or other needful coercion' and declared that 'we, for our part, wish we had a good plantation, well stocked with healthy negroes, in Alabama' (Blassingame II.486n; Dillon II.44–55). Douglass, who in 1848 had praised 'the martyrdom of Mitchel,' now called Mitchel a 'traitor to liberty,' but unsurprisingly Mitchel was feted in the South for his defence of slavery and for his demand that the slave trade be reopened (Blassingame II.486).

If John Mitchel rejected abolitionist attempts to co-opt Irish-Americans to the antislavery cause, Mitchel himself had been the victim of the crossover between anti-Irish and anti-African racism promulgated in the Victorian period by *Punch* magazine (Curtis 100).[9] One form that this 'debasement of Darwinian typology' took was 'the Irishman . . . "simianized" by Victorian caricaturists': on 18 March 1862, *Punch* told its readers that 'A creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro is to be met with in some of the lowest districts of London and Liverpool by adventurous explorers. It comes from Ireland' (Foster 171).

Douglass, who in Cork on 23 October 1845 delivered an address on 'American Prejudice Against Color', was well aware of the rise of ethnology and its tendency to link black with Irish, a manoeuvre Douglass himself sometimes appropriated and subverted to his own ends. In Hudson, Ohio, on 12 July 1854, Douglass delivered his address titled 'The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered,' in which he recalled 'The day I landed in Ireland, nine years ago' when he had addressed

> a large meeting of the common people of Ireland, on temperance. Never did human faces tell a sadder tale. More than five thousand were assembled: and I say, with no wish to wound the feelings of any Irishman, that these people lacked only a black skin and woolly hair, to complete their likeness to the plantation negro (Blassingame II. 520–1).

In Rochester, New York, again in 1854, Douglass implicitly yoked anti-black to anti-Irish racism when he summarized 'The doctrine of the hour' which 'is that the negro is inferior to the white . . . and now the Anglo-Saxon is boasting his superiority to the negro and to the Irishman' (Blassingame

II.488). Douglass himself, however, often indulged in the nineteenth-century black American pastime of telling Irish jokes: in his *Narrative*, Douglass says that 'I had something of the feeling about Baltimore that is expressed in the proverb, that "being hanged in England is preferable to dying a natural death in Ireland"' (Douglass 34). One of Douglass's later arguments for black suffrage was, 'If (the negro) knows as much when sober, as an Irishman knows when drunk, he knows enough to vote.' In 1890, he said 'they talk of the ignorance of the negro. Did you ever hear the Democratic party complain of the ignorance of the Irish vote?' (Blassingame III.604, IV.435).

In seventeenth-century America, 'Even Irishmen, who were white, Christian, and European, were held to be . . . "beyond the Pale," and some were even referred to as slaves' (Degler 30). Frederick Douglass referred to himself as 'Standing outside the pale of American humanity' (Douglass 769).[10] Douglass went, literally, beyond the Pale, to Cork, in October of 1845. In a letter written from Limerick to Richard Dowden, Mayor of Cork, Douglass thanks Dowden 'for the many attentions which you pleased to show me during my somewhat protracted stay in the City' – 'Trampled, reviled and maltreated as I have been by white people . . . you may readily imagine the grateful emotions which thrill my heart when I meet with facts – forever dispelling the darkness of such infernal doctrines (Dowden U. 140.98). The affection Douglass felt for Cork – 'I shall ever remember my visit with pleasure' – was reciprocated in the fulsome 'Address to Frederick Douglass From Anti-Slavery Societies of Cork,' printed in the *Cork Examiner* on 7 November 1845. The relationship between Douglass and Cork was symbolized by the signet ring which Dowden subsequently sent to Douglass, on behalf of the city.[11]

The Cork Anti-Slavery Society had been founded on the principle of 'ecumenical co-operation', but in reality consisted of 'an uneasy juxtaposition of very opposed religious and political interests' (Harrison, 'Cork Anti-Slavery' 71–2). For instance, Cork antislavery activists included such temperance advocates as Thomas Jennings, Douglass's host in Cork and maker of 'non-intoxicating winter stout', Jennings's business partner Mayor Richard Dowden, the teetotal founder of the *Cork Examiner* J.F. Maguire, and the sometime antislaver Mathew himself, as well as Mrs Beamish, of the Beamish brewing family and president of the Cork Ladies Anti-Slavery Society at the time of Douglass' visit to the city.[12] Francis Mahony, in the persona of Father Prout, highlights such opposed interests in verse 3 of his 'Dick Dowden's Song':

> With soda's cheerful essence
> They'd fill the brimming glass,
> And feel the mild 'fervescence
> Of hydrogen and gas;

Nor quaff Geneva's liquor –
Source of a thousand ills!
Nor swill the poisonous ichor
Cork (to her shame!) distils
(Mahony 97).

Although Douglass was applauded for bringing together the various religious and political factions of the city in a unified commitment to antislavery, his 'protracted' sojourn in Cork seems to have intensified such oppositions as much as it healed them. Isabel Jennings applauded Douglass for boosting membership of and support for both the Cork Anti-Slavery Society and the Cork Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, of which she was the co-secretary – and for doing so across religious divides.[13] Yet Douglass was also castigated for displaying sectarian bias: Cork Methodists criticized him for singling Methodists out for attack (because of Methodist proslavery in America) among a predominantly Roman Catholic audience in his speech at the Court House on 14 October 1845, reprinted in the *Cork Examiner* the following day. Douglass was later disingenuous in his self-defence, saying, in the Cork *Constitution* of 21 October 1845 that he was 'a fallible man; and it would be requiring too much that he should know men's religions by their faces.' That Douglass was, in fact, very well aware of the religious (and political) composition of his audiences in Ireland is apparent, from the several invocations of Daniel O'Connell made to his mainly Catholic, and mainly working-class, listeners (O'Connell's name is not mentioned in Douglass's address at Cork's Wesleyan Chapel).[14] Douglass elicited 'Tremendous cheers' from his Catholic Court House audience for his words, with their topical and subversive subtext, about slaves who are capable of 'looking defiance at their masters'. Daniel O'Connell, too, had criticized Methodism's relationship with American slavery, and when O'Connell himself addressed a Cork antislavery meeting, his audience was 'implacably opposed to his politics and had besides strong anti-Catholic prejudices' (Blassingame I.456n; Fagan II.239–40). Douglass's rejoinder to the criticisms of the Cork Methodists was spirited. The *Cork Examiner* of 20 October 1845 reports his remark that 'if the majority of the persons at the meeting in the Court House were Roman Catholics, it showed they felt more sympathy with the slave than did the other sects.' Cork Methodists subsequently attempted to discredit Douglass in the eyes of their co-religionists in Belfast, a significant port of call in Douglass's Irish itinerary because of the close relationship between Ulster and Scotland at the time of a scandal surrounding the solicitation of funds from American slaveholders by the Free Church of Scotland.[15]

It was Douglass's turn to take umbrage, however, when he was informed that he had been described in the Cork *Constitution* in terms which, he

complained, 'looked like a good advertisement from a slave trader'. Douglass claimed that the *Constitution* had called him 'an excellent specimen of the negro,' but the *Constitution* insisted on 21 October 1845 that this was 'altogether a creature of his own imagination'. Douglass had in fact been described in the *Constitution* as 'a fine young negro, with expressive features' who 'speaks English with ease and correctness': it was the *Southern Reporter* which had described him, on 16 October 1845 as 'a noble specimen of the race to which he belonged'. Douglass might have had as much reason to object to the description of him offered by the *Cork Examiner* of 15 October 1845, which suggested that 'his appearance is singularly pleasing and agreeable' because 'there is little, if anything, in his features of that peculiar prominence of lower face, thickness of lips, and flatness of nose, which peculiarly characterizes the true Negro type.'

Controversial too, at least potentially, was the veneration of the handsome Douglass by the Cork – and later the Belfast – Ladies' Anti-Slavery Societies.[16] Following Douglass' visit to Belfast, one female antislavery campaigner declared, 'I am convinced that there is scarcely a lady in Belfast who would not be anxious to join in any means calculated to promote the enfranchisement of the deeply injured Africans' (Oldham 180). The *Southern Reporter* of October 16 1845 notes that that when Douglass spoke at the city court house, 'The Grand Jury Gallery was thronged with ladies, who seemed to take the liveliest interest in the proceedings.'

Since Charles Lenox Remond's visit to the city in 1841, the chief function of CLASS, the Cork Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, was to make handicrafts to send to American antislavery bazaars. Its 1846 advertisement for contributions played on Douglass' recent visit to Cork: 'The eloquent, powerful, and touching appeals of FREDERICK DOUGLASS, in behalf of his enslaved and suffering fellow-countrymen, are so fresh in your memories, that we deem it only necessary to remind you, that the time is approaching to send your Contributions to the Bazaar' (Dowden U.140). A typical CLASS year's work is the 'Cork box of 1848,' which included '42 seaweed pieces; 5 Berlin wool pieces; 11 knitted doilies; 3 crochet neck ties; 3 pairs of children's socks; 4 dolls; 1 baby's cap' (Oldham 179).

Perhaps a less ephemeral Cork contribution to antislavery lies in the fact that Anna Richardson of Newcastle, the woman who, in 1846, bought Douglass's freedom from his 'master,' was the sister of his hostess in Cork, Ann Jennings (Oldham 179).[17] So, in some sense, Douglass found his freedom through Ireland on a literal as well as on a metaphorical level. Douglass, it seems, made as profound, if not as literal, a mark upon Cork in 1845 as he made upon Edinburgh in 1846, where Douglass carved his antislavery message to the Free Church – 'SEND BACK THE MONEY' – into the turf at the

base of Arthur's Seat (Shepperson 128). Despite 'the little misunderstanding between myself and the Reporter of one of your papers' – a 'misunderstanding' which appears to have been exacerbated, if not engineered, by infighting between rival local newspapers – Douglass stressed, in the farewell address to the citizens of Cork which he delivered in the Imperial Hotel, how 'Particularly' he was 'indebted to the press for their freedom in copying the few feeble words I have been able to say in this City, that they might return to my land, and sound terribly in the ears of the oppressors of my countrymen' (Blassingame I.71). And today, more than 150 years after Douglass left Ireland, his name is still invoked in the contemporary Irish press. Writing in the *Irish Times* on 30 May 1997 and 26 February 1998, Fintan O'Toole has compared the violence committed against blacks by nineteenth-century Irish emigrants to America with current Irish hostility toward (coloured) immigrants at home, and has cited, poignantly in this context, Douglass's delight at finding, in the Ireland of 1845, 'the entire absence of everything that looked like prejudice against me, on account of the color of my skin'. An *Irish Times* editorial of 20 April 1998 warns prospective immigrants to present-day Ireland that 'the jungle of the so-called Celtic Tiger is a less welcoming place than the impoverished Ireland of the Famine era, especially if your skin is dark.'

Notes and References

1 The first book Douglass managed to buy when still a slave in Baltimore was Caleb Bingham's eloquent handbook, *The Columbian Orator*, first published in 1797. See Douglass, 41, 225 532.

2 O'Connell himself, despite Douglass's protestations to the contrary, accepted money for his Repeal cause from Southern slaveholders: a letter to O'Connell from Dublin abolitionist James Haughton warns O'Connell against continuing to receive such funds (unidentifiable newspaper clipping, Dowden U.140).

3 For example, see the title to Petheca and Roy's *To the Land of the Free from this Island of Slaves*.

4 In his *Frederick Douglass*, Benjamin Quarles states, 'Ignoring the potato famine which then gripped the country, he attributed all of Ireland's woes to the dram shop' (41).

5 In his letter to O'Connell, James Haughton says, of Irish-Americans and proslavery, 'Save them, I beseech you, save them from this deep degradation.' See note 2, above.

6 See *Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1845; Harrison, 'Cork Anti-Slavery' 77; for Jennings, see Pettit 70. Thomas Jennings was a manufacturer of vinegar and mineral water: as labels preserved in the Cork Public Museum show, Jennings's products included flavoured soda-waters and lemon squash. Douglass describes what happened when 'On the morning after the soirée, Father Mathew invited us to breakfast with him at his own house' in a letter to the *Liberator*, rpt. in Maguire 224.

7 In Dublin two of the best-known figures in the antislavery movement, Richard Webb and James Haughton, were also prominent in the promotion of temperance, and in

Cork the meetings of a temperance society founded there in 1831 took place in a room where the local antislavery society took breakfast.' Kerrigan, *Father Mathew* 27.

8 Frank J. Mathew argues that although Father Mathew 'had never felt the slightest doubt that slavery was a curse and a disgrace', yet, 'If he had combined an attack on slavery with his temperance work, he would have discarded the main principle of his life-work, and have made his American journey fruitless' (179). Father Mathew claimed 'I have as much as I can do to save men from the slavery of intemperance, without attempting to overthrow any other kind of slavery' (Maguire 289).

9 Father Mathew, too, 'was contemptuously mocked, for all *Punch*'s own exhortations to the Irish to sober up' (Foster 180).

10 The *Limerick Reporter* of 11 November 1845 reports Douglass's words: 'If any man exists in Ireland who would [treat another man as a slave] . . . may he be excluded from the pale of human sympathy.'

11 The gift of the ring is mentioned in Douglass's letter to Dowden.

12 Douglass reports that at breakfast with Father Mathew, a Mr Wm. O'Connor 'complained a little of his severity towards the distillers of Cork' to which Mathew replied that 'Such men had no right to prosper by the ruin of others' (Foner 5.8).

13 Isabel Jennings wrote, of Douglass, 'Never was [there] a person who made a greater sensation in Cork amongst all religious beliefs'; in another letter, she said, of Douglass's visit, 'we think we have got contributions from persons belonging to the Church (of England) who never could have been influenced except by a person who had himself suffered – we had no means of approaching them and the clergymen are silent' (McFeely 124; and in Taylor 243–4).

14 The Cork *Constitution* of 16 October 1845 tells us that the Court House meeting was 'numerously attended by the working classes'.

15 Douglass thought Belfast a 'hotbed of Presbyterianism and Free Churchism' but told the Dublin printer Richard Webb, 'a blow can be struck here more effectually than in any other part of Ireland.' Douglas quarrelled with Webb over the inclusion in the second Dublin edition of his *Narrative* of endorsements from two Belfast Presbyterian ministers. Webb feared such endorsements would frame the text in narrowly 'sectarian' terms. See Blassingame 1:86; Harrison, *Richard Davis Webb* 2–3; Foner I.66; *Cork Examiner* 12 January 1846.

16 The *Cork Examiner* of 15 October 1845 reports that Douglass's Court House meeting was attended by 'over one hundred ladies'. See Oldham 179.

17 Anna Atkins Richardson (1806–92) was a member of the Society of Friends, and belonged to the anti-Garrisonian British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Her role in the purchase of Douglass's freedom, and 'her continued support of Douglass and her friendship with Julia Griffith, Douglass's associate, made her suspect among British Garrisonians', Ripley 225n.

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