

The purpose of this dissertation is to interpret Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) from twentieth-century perspectives. To this end, we have read the two slave narratives in the light of twentieth-century black American feminist and political thought as well as literature. This reading of *Narrative* and *Incidents* proposes to explore the ways in which the issues that Douglass and Jacobs broached, are taken over by twentieth-century black militants and writers. The aim of this reading is to point out the similarities and/or differences, the continuities and/or discontinuities between the ideas of the two former slaves and those of twentieth-century blacks, while taking into account their respective circumstances. The twentieth-century reading of the two slave narratives calls for Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism. More exactly, we make use of the response-anticipation principle, which we think appropriate for this case. Our major hypothesis is that Douglass's and Jacobs's ideas and feelings, as expressed in their narratives, were a response to nineteenth century white American thought and, at the same time, an anticipation of twentieth-century black American political thought and literary practice. The two geno-texts are thus placed - through this intertextual exercise - at the confluence of nascent African-American literature and historiography

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