

Authenticity of Slave Narratives

Slave narratives are records of protest against slavery in America left by ex-slaves. In these narratives, there is the slave narration and there is the reformist editor; therefore, authenticity of the narratives is in doubt, for being used as abolitionist propaganda. An ex-slave, Omar Ibn Said, left more than fourteen manuscripts; only one of these was translated into English in 1836. The authors of these narratives, focusing on the slave's being converted into Christianity, directed the style since they had the freedom to re-narrate and control what was said and published as in the narratives of Selim of Algeria and Prince Abdul Rahaman. These Arabic narratives found no way for publication, since they used the Arabic language. What have been published were translated excerpts from the original manuscripts or oral translations. Despite their shortcomings, Arabic slave narratives were contributions to the American cultural history in the nineteenth century.