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**SPEAKING OUT: ORATORY AND THE LEGACY OF ACTIVE VIRTUE IN  
AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1800-1850**

by

GRANVILE GANTER

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York

1998

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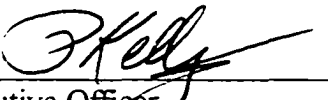
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Abstract

SPEAKING OUT: ORATORY AND THE LEGACY OF ACTIVE VIRTUE IN  
AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1800-1850

by

Granville Ganter

Advisor: Professor William Kelly

This dissertation is a study of interpenetration of oratory and fiction in the first half of the nineteenth century. As scholars like Robert Ferguson have pointed out, the style of deliberative moral oratory typified by Daniel Webster slowly lost prestige to the growing authority of the technical expert, the professional conclusions of a bureaucrat. I argue, however, that American writers responded to this shift in cultural authority by incorporating strategies of moral oratory into their own work as a means of reasserting and revising the moral agency of American citizenship. Central to the project is an excavation of the concept of active virtue, an influential component of evangelical Calvinist preaching and republican civic practice.

My first chapter defines the eighteenth-century origins of active virtue in Common Sense philosophy and Edwardsian evangelism. My second chapter, a close study of an early American school anthology, The Columbian Orator (1797), defines the concept of active virtue as a literary, philosophical, and religious obligation. My third chapter examines the interconnections of Native and white rhetoric in James Fenimore Cooper's

fiction, particularly in The Last of the Mohicans and The Redskins. My fourth chapter proposes new way of reading Emerson's essay "Circles" in terms of Emerson's interest in oratory. While "Circles" (1840-1) has been long understood as a rather skeptical meditation on the provisional nature of the products of "thought." I argue the essay is really a celebration of the evanescent moments of oratory and spoken discourse. I support this claim by connecting the essay's "circle" imagery to Thomas Hart Benton's attempt to "circle" the censure of President Jackson during the Expunging controversy. My fifth chapter analyzes the strategies of Frederick Douglass's oratory and his transmission of those techniques to his written prose, such as his novella, "The Heroic Slave." My final chapter explores the influence of women's rights oratory on the fiction of Sarah Josepha Hale and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

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## Introduction

In the middle of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, an angry crowd surrounds Colonel Sherburn to lynch him for shooting Boggs, the defenseless town drunk. Standing on his front porch, Sherburn disperses them with a lecture on the difference between a man and mob, arrogantly defying the crowd to attack and berating them as pitiful cowards. Sherburn's speech is a grandly satiric moment in Twain's text, powerful for its exaggerated rhetorical flourish and its irony:

The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is--a mob, they don't fight with a courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without a man at the head of it is beneath pitifulness. Now the thing for you to do is droop your tails and go home and crawl in a hole. If any real lynching's going to be done it will be done in the dark, Southern fashion, and when they come they'll bring their masks, and fetch a man along. Now leave. (Twain 142)

Sherburn's advice on proper civic conduct is comically misguided and yet his rhetoric is strangely compelling. Despite Sherburn's hypocrisy, there is a virtuous strength in his speech. For all of his arrogance, he speaks with an admirable courage that the mob lacks. Twain's juxtaposition of this scene with Huck's attendance at a circus creates a labyrinth of other ironies concerning the definition of virtue, rhetoric, and entertainment, as well. In both scenes, Huck is witnessing a well-rehearsed American melodrama.

Although Twain wrote Huckleberry Finn in the late 1870s, Sherburn's confrontation with the mob is a familiar tableau of antebellum culture. School readers prepared students to deliver climactic public addresses; novelists and dramatists never tired of portraying them; historians venerated them; and a host of individuals, ranging from

upstart revolutionaries, to Abolition orators and Native-American chieftains, performed them. Why were these scenes of public speech so important in early America? What do these speeches tell us about American culture? Most of all, why should American literature, so closely tied to the technology of print culture, have a stake in dramatizing the power of the speaking voice?

The object of this study is an examination of how oratorical culture influenced American literature during the first half of the nineteenth century. Long derided as a retrograde influence on American letters, oratory nonetheless played a complex role in shaping early national culture. As a comprehensive practice of citizenship, regulating social philosophy, physical gesture, and literary expression, oratory propounded both the goals and means of early American national identity.

Early American culture was obsessed by the power of the spoken word. From the colonial period through the Civil War, America was a nation of speakers. As a literary form, oratory was cheap to produce, highly mobile, and disruptively democratic--anyone with a working set of lungs could find an audience. The front pages of most newspapers contained reprints of speeches on various topics: Indian affairs, legal cases, and political debates between Democrats and Whigs. Newspapers were often read aloud at family gatherings and at work. Through church attendance, most Americans heard at least one sermon per week, if not several, and the sermons themselves were republished by the hundreds. Those with evangelical tastes participated in tent revivals and camp meetings. Speeches also celebrated the achievements and routine business of voluntary societies and

working-class associations.<sup>1</sup> Among the middling classes after the 1820s, weekend entertainment included the lyceum, where people heard lectures on exotic topics, new inventions, or philosophy. In cities large enough to house theaters, heroic speeches were a staple of American melodrama. Churches and town granges provided forums for Abolition speeches, political debates, and benevolent associations. Parents attended school speech exhibitions several times a year to see their children attempt to imitate Daniel Webster. Despite recurrent complaints about demagoguery, fraud, and grandiloquence, oratory served as a central form of social entertainment and civil education.

The impact of oratory on nineteenth-century American writing is manifest in several related areas. The most noticeable is the declamatory rhetoric of poets and novelists stretching from David Humpherys to Harriet Beecher Stowe. Many writers'

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Associational oratory is a rich, and often overlooked, archive of the popular form, as Gordon Bigelow demonstrates in his study of the oratorical aspects of early national poetry. Consider the following "Ode to the Potato," given at the University of Pennsylvania, and reprinted in the Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine in 1790: "Farmers of Pennsylvania, cultivate the potato! Citizens of Philadelphia, eat, oh! eat, plentifully and constantly of the potato! Let them be the constant food of your children, instead of bread, in the intervals of their meals. Legislators of Pennsylvania encourage by subtle bounties, the increase and exportation of the potato. Let this precious root be blended hereafter with the wheat-sheaf, in the arms of our state. (Here Mr. Blanche took a potato from his pocket and held it in his hand). Hail highly favored vegetable! Parent of health, strength, courage, and beauty of the human species! Nay more, parent of the human species themselves! May we always honor thee! And may we always eat thee, as we should do! With meat or without it, with buttermilk or without it: in soup, in puddings, in pies, in bread, in biscuit, in sage, in salad, or in coffee!--Still may we prefer thee to all other vegetables! Sweet root! Kind root! I take thee to my bosom; go people our western country, (here the potato was gently thrown on the stage, and viewed affectionately in pronouncing the remaining part of the oration), go teach the nations of the earth to be temperate and healthy, go civilize the world" (qtd. in Bigelow 73).

training in civic and religious oratory is often reflected in the heroic apostrophes and narrative sermonizing of their writing styles. Furthermore, the content of early nineteenth-century literature often responds to the oratorical debates of the age, including disputes over slavery, women's rights, Indian removal, and the national mission. Many of the fictions I consider in this study, such as Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans or Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave," were written in reaction to the popular oratory of their day. Even canonical writers of American Romanticism, such as Emerson and Thoreau, were active lecturers in the political controversies of the antebellum period.

Nineteenth-century oratory also fostered a republican communitarian ideal which had a remarkable influence on the goals of early American literary endeavor. In broadest terms, oratory inspired a collectivist spirit of social duty. This obligation, articulated in both the substance and performative context of oratorical expression, promoted a supple ideal of individual responsibility to society, a form of communitarianism I call collective individualism. While collective individualism existed alongside "selfish" individualisms in the nineteenth century, continually complicating the spectrum of liberal culture, I argue that the type of individualism evident in some of our most celebrated authors--Stowe, Emerson, Douglass, and many others--is more closely connected to oratorical notions of individual duty than to economic ideals of individual possessive freedom. The scope of this study is thus both an explanation of why public speech has been such an important part of nineteenth-century culture and fiction, and a recovery of a mode of collective individualism which has been increasingly obscured by modern accounts of the rise, and

purported hegemony of bourgeois liberalism<sup>2</sup>

The collective individualism of early national oratory derived from **active virtue**, an influential ideal of evangelical Calvinist preaching and republican civic practice. Active virtue was an activist philosophy of social duty and responsibility, and a code of literary conduct. In Calvinist terms, active virtue is the individual means through which the social collective is fostered. Initially a theological principle, active virtue became associated with habits of righteous speech during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. New Divinity theologians, such as Samuel Hopkins, taught that active benevolence toward others was the highest form of virtue. In America, this belief fused with the oratorical precepts of British rhetoricians to spiritualize the purpose of vocal and written expression. With the collapse of institutional theology in the early nineteenth century, literature became the primary sponsor of active virtue, not the church and state. Active virtue became propagated through the texts of poetry and fiction, rather than through oral ceremony. The dynamic rituals of spoken discourse were re-embodied in typeface.<sup>3</sup> As

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See Sacvan Bercovitch's The Rites of Assent for a sophisticated account of the hegemony of bourgeois liberalism. Bercovitch asserts that history is over; it has resulted in the triumph of liberal possessive individualism; and our job as scholars is to explain how it came to be this way. Both the strength and weakness of Bercovitch's argument lie in its breadth. By defining liberal (individualistic) culture as encompassing nearly every oppositional force in America, Bercovitch is hard put to explain the causes of historical change, or the meaning of differences within liberal culture. The history of liberalism is not over yet. The task of this study is to recover other forces, such as collective individualism, which shaped, and continue to influence, what liberal culture is. For criticisms of Bercovitch's hypothesis, see Gura, "What Hath Bercovitch Wrought," and Hanlan.

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For more on the emergence of print culture, see Michael Warner's Letters of the Republic and Larzer Ziff's Writing in the New Nation.

the oratorical ethos of speakers lost stature to the persona/e of print, many American writers adopted features of that decaying culture to their prose. I demonstrate this shift not only through analyses of the numerous speeches which appear in early American fiction, but by showing American writers' sophisticated adaptation of an oratorical tradition of active virtue. The oratorical ideal of the virtuous union of thought, deed, and speech was as powerful a force on women's writing as men's.

The ideal of active virtue is what intensifies Twain's satire of Sherburn in Huckleberry Finn. The irony of Sherburn's apologia is that it turns active virtue on its head. Sherburn's celebration of courageous individualism is not entirely libertarian--he disparages the mechanics of "mob" thinking with the obligation of people to act with integrity. His vision of social renewal is based in acts of individual conscience. Twain, however, turns this belief system upside down as Sherburn advises the town about the proper conduct of a lynching party.

At the same time, Twain's portrait of Sherburn is a satire of the literary manifestation of active virtue, which Twain nonetheless recuperates with fond nostalgia. Invigorating Fenimore Cooper's oracular chieftains and patriarchs as he lampoons their memory, Twain uses Sherburn to cast Huck's moral individualism into high relief. Indeed, the entirety of Huckleberry Finn is Twain's exposition of a deeply felt, individualistic moral sense which Huck has difficulty vocalizing except through his action. Sherburn's misguided sense of active virtue is a burlesque which rehabilitates the oratorical ideal for which he speaks.

The yield of retrieving the influence of oratory on American culture and literature

is fourfold. First, it provides an understanding of the ways the period's mainstream prose was inspired by the topics of contemporary oratory. Far from describing a "world elsewhere," the works I examine are profoundly engaged with the oratorical controversies of the period. For example, Emerson's "Circles," long thought as a skeptical meditation on the permanence of thought, is a celebration of Daniel Webster and Senator Thomas Hart Benton's attempts to "circle" each other's achievements during the Expunging controversy of 1836-9, as well as a tribute to the eloquence of Father Edward T. Taylor. Even Sarah J. Hale, well known for her role shaping nineteenth-century ideals of domesticity, quietly defended female orators in her journal, Godey's Lady's Book, and in her novel The Lecturess, written in response to the Grimke sisters' speaking tour of 1837-8. These writers not only reacted to social debate, they actively participated in it.

Second, these writers' engagement with the oratorical controversies of the nineteenth century also reveals the important role oratorical theory played in shaping American writers' literary style. Aside from the apparently superficial issue of writers' appropriation of heroic apostrophe or polemic, theories of oratorical performance guided the self-presentation of writers' narrative voice. Most students of the early national period were thoroughly trained in the theory and practice of "sublime" declamation, pathetic appeal, and ironic inversion. Frederick Douglass's autobiographies and Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin are virtual catalogues of common oratorical tropes of the period. Knowledge of the rhetorical tradition in which these novelists wrote is essential to understanding their texts.

Third, an examination of early American oratorical culture reveals an alternative

tradition of republican individualism which existed alongside the liberal individualism of Jacksonian America. While oratory sponsored a wide range of retrograde social philosophies oriented around the right of individual possession (nationalism, imperialism, and slavery), its cultural authority was derived from moral appeal, and the manipulation of a sense of duty to the general welfare. Drawing from theological mandate, humanitarian instinct, and theories of republican “disinterestedness,” oratory was a literary form guided by a logic of sympathy, not selfishness. While the communitarian practice of republican “virtue” has often been recognized a powerful ideal of early American culture, its influence has been characterized as a residual, and finally ineffectual force on the consolidation of liberal American culture. The oratory and belle-letters of the mid-nineteenth century, however, demonstrate the lasting power of these collectivist ideals of individual civic conduct.

Nearly all the writers I consider in this study--Cooper, Emerson, Douglass, Hale and Stowe--have been identified as agents of a liberal tradition of possessive individualism.<sup>4</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch has argued that even the oppositional characteristics of these writers' literature, such as Douglass or Stowe's radicalism, can be absorbed by hegemonic liberal culture as ineffectual “rituals of dissent” (“Problem”; Rites). But to

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For Emerson and Douglass's ties to liberal culture, see Bercovitch, “The Problem” and Rites. Bercovitch's controversial interpretation of Douglass derives from Peter Walker's influential Moral Choices, which argues that Frederick Douglass wanted to be white. For Hale and Stowe's liberalism, see Nicole Hoffman and Gillian Brown. For Cooper's vexed relationship to Jacksonian individualism and the rights of property, see Robert Clark's History and Myth, and Michael Gilmore's essay on Cooper in the Cambridge History of American Literature.

dismiss the radical elements of these writers as harmlessly liberal paves over the spirit which animated their work. Many of these writers took the "old" ideas of republican and Calvinist virtue seriously and wrote in the hope of redeeming the nation from the grossly selfish tendencies of Jacksonian and antebellum culture. The republican impulse is particularly intriguing in the writing of Emerson and Cooper, both of whom wrestled with the consequences of individualism in American society. Cooper, a professed Democrat, abhorred the demagoguery of his age but nonetheless attempted to construct a countervailing voice of republican "disinterest" through his fiction. At the same time Emerson celebrated the "infinite of the private man," he was enraptured by public oratory and spoke vehemently on behalf of the public cause of Abolition.

Finally, the study of oratory provides an alternative method of literary interpretation that upsets contemporary assumptions about the hermeneutics the reading process. The enjoyment of novels is largely a private act between reader and text, to attend a speech is a social engagement. Reading tends to associate literature with the consumption of a commodity, and the act of interpretation, however contingent, is a private act. While recent theories of reception and reader-response have emphasized the active components of reading, reading nonetheless presents a different field of hermeneutic possibilities than oratory. Like drama, oratory is a public art form. Speaker and audience face each other, creating a matrix of social relationships that reading can only imitate. Readers usually can't see or feel how other readers are acting. In oratory, the personal act of interpretation is publicly engaged and immediate. Recognizing the subtle differences of these two types of literary experience helps us to better understand the unique appeal of

oratory to nineteenth-century society. It also sheds light on the social practices of nineteenth-century reading, such as the popularity of reading aloud to family and friends.

One twentieth-century scholar who has forged research on the interpretation of oral and written literature is Walter Ong. Ranging from his Ramus and Decay of Dialogue (1958) to his summary work in Oratory and Literacy (1982), Ong has argued that oral narrative is not only organized in a different manner than writing, but that it derives from a completely different psychology and “life-world.” Ong has taught us to appreciate the aggregative (repetitious) style of oral narrative and, most importantly, to understand that the acts of speech and hearing activate different cognitive processes than do reading and writing. Ong’s theories are particularly useful for studying Native-American oratory and the techniques of persuasion used by Frederick Douglass.

Nineteenth-century oratory, however, both spoken and read. Manuals for public speaking were produced in print. It was a hybrid literature, connecting the spheres of private consumption and public performance. Like Frederick Douglass, most nineteenth-century orators learned how to speak from books. Native-American chieftains modified their speech with the awareness that what they said would be translated and fixed into printed English (as a result, they often “played” the white man’s Indian that their audiences expected to hear). Interpreting the period’s oratory thus requires the recognition that print culture had a significant role in shaping oratory, and that the interpretation of a given body of nineteenth-century speeches requires putting that work in simultaneously oral, literary, and political contexts.

The profound interplay between language, literature, and politics during the

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been the subject of a growing body of research over the past fifteen years. David Reynolds, David Simpson, Michael Kramer, Kenneth Cmeil, Jay Fliegelman, Thomas Gustafson, and Garry Wills, as well as many others, have argued that the written literature of the early nineteenth century was greatly influenced by debates about grammar, theology, rhetorical theory, and political ideology.<sup>5</sup> Taken as a group, these texts have amply demonstrated the powerful influence of oratory on American society, and on the creation of "American" styles of writing.

One valuable text that examines the peculiar tension between orality and literacy,

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David Simpson's *The Politics of American English* (1986) suggest that the plurality of voices evident in Fenimore Cooper's frontier writing offers an alternative, and pluralistic, vision of American culture to the monological "spermatic, man-making" voice of transcendentalism. David Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance* (1987), and his earlier *Faith in Fiction* (1981), argue a strong case for the influence of popular religious oratory on American literature. Kenneth Cmeil's *Democratic Eloquence* is an encyclopedic sociological examination of the development of a "middling style" in American discourse, which implicitly demonstrates how works like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fit into larger debates about the use and abuses of language. Thomas Gustafson's *Representative Words* (1992) explores how American politicians and writers attempted to establish a more "representative" language. Gustafson's discussion of the relationship between political and linguistic corruption is exceptional. The strength of Garry Wills's *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (1992) is its exposition of the oratorical context Lincoln's speech. Jay Fliegelman's *Declaring Independence* (1993) discusses the performative aspects of the Declaration, connecting Jefferson's sense of literary performance to a wide range of other social practices in late eighteenth-century America. Other works include Philip Gura's *The Wisdom of Words* (1981), Dennis Baron's *Grammar and Good Taste* (1983), Robert Ferguson's *Law and Literature* (1984), Mark Patterson's *Authority, Autonomy and Representation* (1988), Cynthia Jordan's *Second Stories* (1989), Nan Johnson's *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America* (1991), Michael Kramer's *Imagining Language in America* (1992), Louise Barnett's *Authority and Speech* (1993), Alessandro Portelli's *The Text and the Voice* (1994), and Christopher Looby's *Voicing America* (1996). See also Sandra Gustafson's articles on Margaret Fuller's conversation in *American Quarterly* 47.1 (1995): 34-65; and Jonathan Edwards and the construction of "feminine" speech *ALH* 6.2 (1994): 185-212.

and between republicanism and liberalism in nineteenth-century oratory is Gregory Clark and Michael S. Halloran's Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (1993). Synthesizing recent work on the sociology of American literature, their argument frames the historical teleology of this study by demonstrating that civic oratory underwent a process of modernization during the nineteenth century that generally stripped it of its moral edge.<sup>6</sup> Clark and Halloran argue that the style of deliberative moral oratory typified by Daniel Webster's early career slowly lost prestige to the emerging authority of the technical expert, the professional conclusions of a bureaucrat. The questions of civil justice concerning Native-Americans, slaves, and rights of property became discussions of the technicalities of law rather than debates about the moral obligation of citizens to each other. The vexing historiographic problem of studying antebellum culture is that "moral" and "professional" discourses existed simultaneously. Contemporary history suggests that technical authority eventually supplanted moral appeal in the twentieth century, but to citizens of antebellum culture, the outcome was not so clear.

The apparent antagonism between republican morality and technical "right" (law) in antebellum culture is at the crux of recent disputes about the nature of American liberalism. While the process of technical professionalization began long before the Civil War, the language of moral virtue persisted for long after. As John Diggins notes in his Lost Soul of American Politics, the problem is understanding how the Calvinist, communitarian burden of Lincoln's Second Inaugural could exist alongside the popularity

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Clark and Halloran draw on Robert Ferguson's Law and Literature for this insight. See also Mark Patterson's Authority, Autonomy, and Representation.

of Jacksonian ideals of possessive individualism (7) But Diggins concludes that “ideas” are not “causes,” and that material circumstances, economic interests, and written laws--not republican ideals of virtue--constituted the foundation of American liberalism (26) Diggins argues that republican ideology was merely a “species of language” which few politicians and writers actually endorsed as the means of sustaining the nation, even though rhetorics of virtue persisted throughout the nineteenth century (63)

While talk of “virtue” may not be registered directly in the words of the Constitution, the scope of its influence as a literary practice in the nineteenth century should not be underestimated. Many students no longer study the theology of Samuel Hopkins or Jonathan Edwards, nor do they read Cicero, but they do read Emerson, Stowe, and Douglass, and these writers deeply assimilated the communitarian ideals of a previous age. The goal of this study is a literary recovery of the “lost soul” of American active virtue, and an exposition of how it penetrated American literature throughout the nineteenth century

Despite the astonishing popularity of oral literature during the period, modern literary scholarship has been slow recognizing its importance.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Buell, who devotes an entire chapter to oratory in his New England Literary Culture (1986), often has

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An important exception, of course, has been research on the sermon by Perry Miller, Alan Heimert, and Sacvan Bercovitch, and many others. Recent studies of the cultural and historical contexts of American literature, such as those by Lawrence Buell (New England Literary Culture) and David Reynolds (Faith in Fiction; Beneath the American Renaissance), have pointed to religious evangelism as an important shaping force of the American literary imagination. See also Robert Ferguson’s essay on “Religious Voices” in the first volume of the Cambridge History of American Literature.

difficulty taking oratory seriously. Buell points out that oratory gave many writers financial support, and he observes that a “rhetoric of declamation” appears in the works of Dickinson, Whitman, and Melville. But he concludes “it would be mistaken to claim more than a limited influence for oratory as a specific literary model informing the period’s canonical literature generally,” and finds most of the period’s oratory of “baleful” impact (163). Rather, he proposes that the truly literary figures of the American Renaissance, such as Emerson and Thoreau, cultivated “anti-eloquence.” While Buell persuasively characterizes this rhetorical mode of American Romanticism, eloquence itself has yet to be studied with the care it deserves.

One reason why modern literary criticism has paid little attention to secular oratory is a question of taste. In 1952, Barnet Baskerville’s essay, “The Place of Oratory in American Literature,” he complains that since 1930 oratory had been eradicated from surveys of American literature. Baskerville cites the absence of oratory in several anthologies and literary histories to demonstrate that oratory had been systematically amputated from the canon of American prose. While there are important exceptions to Baskerville’s argument, such as Robert Spiller’s 1948 Literary History, or F. O. Matthiessen’s American Renaissance, both of which appreciate the influence of political and religious oratory on American literary prose, they are exceptions that prove the rule. The historical and didactic elements of nineteenth-century oratory clearly fell outside of the interest of most New Critics, who were more interested in psychology and poetics than historical context. Even through the 1970s, there had been little appreciation for American oratory as an intrinsic field of nineteenth-century literature, despite treatments

of oral culture in studies of Whitman or Puritan sermons.<sup>8</sup> And often, when oratory is examined, such as in the 1988 Columbia Literary History, it is described purely as an eruption of social unrest, largely distinct from the nation's literary milieu (Porter 345-57).<sup>9</sup>

Another reason modern literary scholars seldom look at oratory is disciplinary-- oratory is the domain of speech and communication departments. But as Steven Lucas points out in his 1988 essay in the Quarterly Journal of Speech, most critics of public address seldom attend to literary close reading. Nine-tenths of the average speech essay cover historical background, reports of the effect of the speech, and rhetorical taxonomies of ethos, pathos, etc. Lucas argues that speeches like Frederick Douglass's 1852 speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" have yet to be studied in the same way students of literature appreciate Hamlet or Crime and Punishment (247).

Lucas's example of Frederick Douglass is instructive. Until the 1990s, the only scholars who quoted extensively from Douglass's oratory were historians and biographers

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See the previous note for research on sacred oratory, particularly on the jeremiad and evangelism. See also David Reynolds's Walt Whitman's America for an excellent study of Whitman's appropriation of the oratory of his day, esp. 154-94.

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One of the most indicative examples of this trend is the 1994 Cambridge History of American Literature, edited by Sacvan Bercovitch. While it pays extensive attention to the importance of religious oratory, its generic categories don't include secular oratory as a literary form. In the first volume, Robert Ferguson's thoughtful treatment of Native-American oratory is somewhat marginalized by the title of his chapter, "The Limits of Enlightenment." Michael Gilmore's essay on the early national period examines letters, magazines, criticism, essays, drama, poetry, and novels, but not oratory. The second volume includes a good discussion of Native-American oratory by Eric Sundquist. Essays by Barbara Packer and Jonathan Arac include references to the period's oratory, such as the furor over Webster's Seventh of March speech in 1850, but few examinations of the period's oratory as literary prose.

Literary critics, generally interested in the aesthetics of the printed word, rarely mentioned it, despite the fact that Douglass was better known in his own day as a speaker than as a writer.<sup>10</sup> Robert Stepto, for instance, writing on Douglass's "Heroic Slave," finds the novella worthwhile only after dismissing its "florid speeches." For the same reason, Douglass's Narrative has often been heralded as a "better" text than My Bondage and My Freedom because it is shorter, more plaintive in tone, and uninterrupted by the speeches that Douglass inserts into his second autobiography. The reason for this focus is not that Douglass's speeches are inferior to his prose (quite the opposite), but because oratory has been largely exiled from literature departments since the rise of New Criticism.<sup>11</sup>

My recovery of an American tradition of active virtue begins prior to the Revolutionary war. The first part of my argument explores the intersections of rhetorical theory, theology, and political thought during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. My first two chapters describe the emergence of active virtue from the synthesis of Common Sense rhetorical theory and Edwardsian Calvinism. These two traditions meet in Caleb Bingham's The Columbian Orator (1797), a highly popular school text that inspired many imitations. I describe its lasting influence on a wide variety of

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One important exception is Robert O'Meally's 1979 essay, "Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative: The Text Was Meant to Be Preached."

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The present erasure of oratory, however, is less a matter of taste than access. Scholars need a formidable archival library for access to oral history. It wasn't until 1979 that Douglass's speeches were collected in a critical edition (it presently runs 5 volumes, and contains only 10% of Douglass's oratorical output). Despite the publication of The Frederick Douglass Papers, to teach Douglass's oratory requires extensive photocopying. Most nineteenth-century oratory still lies in the strata of microfilms, old books, and loose papers.

American authors, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Frederick Douglass

Succeeding chapters examine the specific oratorical training of major nineteenth-century literary figures who emerged from the early national period. Turning to Ralph Waldo Emerson, I demonstrate how carefully he modeled his speaking style on Daniel Webster, Edward Everett and Father Edward Taylor. I conclude the chapter with a study of Emerson's essay "Circles," written during the heat of the electioneering of the Log Cabin Campaign. I also examine Fenimore Cooper's dramatizations of Native oratory in The Last of the Mohicans and the Littlepage trilogy. I argue that while Cooper was skeptical of Jacksonian demagoguery, he nonetheless constructed a polyphonic "voice" of disinterested virtue through the narrative strategies of his fiction. My fifth chapter analyzes the relationship of Frederick Douglass's oratory to his prose. Drawing from the entirety of Douglass's collected speeches, I connect his use of dramatic humor, mimicry, and irony to the rhetorical strategies of his fiction and autobiographies. My final chapter explores the influence of women's rights oratory on the fiction of Sarah Josepha Hale and Harriet Beecher Stowe. I argue that the work of these writers is an eloquent testament to the appropriation of masculinist active virtue for feminist purposes. I acknowledge both Hale and Stowe's discomfort with the masculinist postures of female orators, but emphasize these writers' explicit engagement with mainstream oratorical culture and republican social practice.

In American cultural history, the early nineteenth century was the age of Daniel Webster. His individual significance, however, is easily eclipsed by a wealth of oral

literature whose influence we have hardly begun to recognize, much less examine. The array of orators I discuss in this project constitute but a fragment of that history. Oppositional, moral, and anti-materialistic, the literature of these figures voices an alternative vision of America's past and present.

## Chapter 1

### Toward a Collective Subject: Evangelical Republicanism

Active virtue, as an American social philosophy and a literary practice, was forged through a complex synthesis of evangelical doctrines of “virtue,” the ideas of Common Sense philosophy, and the rhetorical precepts of British elocution. This cross-fertilization took place over a century-long debate over the origins of human “benevolence.” British Common Sense rationalists, most notably Francis Hutcheson, contended that benevolence was natural. American evangelical theologians believed it was derived from God. While colonial Calvinists never gave up their conviction in God’s overarching purpose, Samuel Hopkins eventually broke with his mentor, Jonathan Edwards, to agree with Hutcheson that “benevolence to others” was the defining mark of true piety and virtue. At the same time, British elocutionists, spurred by the astonishing success of Methodist preaching, began to codify the principles of rhetoric based in the persuasive power of sublime oratory. The three movements fused in the late eighteenth century to create a New England literary philosophy based on the exposition of spiritual and political belief.

The marriage of New Divinity Calvinism with British rhetoric had two consequences. First, it helped to politicize evangelical theology. Convinced that Hutcheson’s “disinterested benevolence” was the earthly manifestation of true virtue, New Divinity theologians gained renewed license to act in civic affairs on behalf of God’s

plan.<sup>12</sup> This shift provided the foundation for the militant tone of nineteenth-century reform movements. Second, the Scottish philosophers and British elocutionists provided Calvinist educators with rhetorical ammunition--such as the discourse of the sublime--to wage literary battle on behalf of their millennial mission. Early American educational texts strongly reflect this synthesis.

A popular assumption about Scottish Common Sense social philosophy is that it had a conservative social effect in America, particularly after 1800 (Charvat 36-8).<sup>13</sup> Scottish writers from Francis Hutcheson to Dugald Stewart believed that truth and beauty could be universally recognized by all educated citizens; that the appreciation of truth could be taught; and that the institutions of humankind were worth conserving. In the words of one twentieth-century historian, Merle Curti, Common Sense philosophy was "admirably suited to the needs of conservatively minded individuals who saw the consolidation of the social order as the prerequisite of successful commercial and industrial enterprise." Many other scholars have agreed, including Roy Harvey Pearce, who writes that it made "rationalism, freedom and individualism safe, even conservative" (qtd in Martin, Instructed 4). As Henry May concludes, the genteel polish of writers like Reid and Stewart, and their dislike for religious enthusiasm, had a sobering effect on New

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I use the term "renewed" to refer to the radical traditions of seventeenth-century militant Puritanism.

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For more on Common Sense philosophy in America, see Terence Martin, The Instructed Vision; Leon Howard, The Connecticut Wits; Frederick May, The Enlightenment in America; Daniel Walker Howe, The Unitarian Conscience, and Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology."

### England culture (343-357)

Prior to 1800, however, the relationship of early Common Sense philosophy to late eighteenth-century America is not as well understood. Some Americans learned about virtuous civic conduct from reading political philosophy--Machiavelli, Harrington, Locke, etc --but many also learned it as a type of literary practice from British arbiters of taste and rhetoric. The reigning critics of belle-letters, Hugh Blair, Joseph Campbell, and a host of allied British elocutionists, offered advice about proper speech and writing based on their beliefs about the mechanics of republican government and the expression of moderate, but heartfelt, spiritual belief. In Britain, the potentially disruptive aspects of Scottish rhetorical theory, such as the celebration of sublime oratory and republican dissent, were successfully contained. In late eighteenth-century America, however, the literary practices advocated by these writers bonded with American evangelism in the northern United States to create a radical rhetoric based in the expression of "natural" virtue.

### **Hutcheson, Virtue, and the New Divinity Movement**

In 1725, Francis Hutcheson's postulation of a natural "moral sense" and his republican notion of "disinterested benevolence," set off a complicated reaction in American theology stretching from Jonathan Edwards to Samuel Hopkins.<sup>14</sup> Initially

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In my reading of the relationship between Hutcheson, Edwards, and Hopkins, I draw extensively from Joseph Conforti's work on Hopkins. Some scholars have gone so far to link the causes of the American Revolution to rhetoric: Bernard Bailyn's The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution proposes pamphlet "argument" as a means of understanding the causes of the Revolution; Alan Heimert's Religion and the American Mind argues the Revolution was encouraged by activist Edwardsian rhetoric. For more on the role of evangelism in the Revolution, see Harry Stout's "Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution" and Robert

resisted by Jonathan Edwards. Hutcheson's theories were eventually adopted by Edwards' disciple, Samuel Hopkins, with the consequence of politicizing spiritual conduct. As the Calvinist definition of "virtue" began to resonate with the Hutcheson's ideals of republican community, Calvinist piety shifted from acts of private contemplation to public action.

Hutcheson's interest in the psychology of benevolence was prompted by a question about government. At the center of early eighteenth-century British political theory had been a desperate concern about the means of social affiliation: what kept citizens from cutting each other's throats--social contract? the state? property rights? intuitive sympathy? The 3rd Earl of Shaftsbury and Francis Hutcheson responded to the pessimism of Hobbes' competitive vision of society by proposing that people had a natural tendency toward "benevolence." In his influential essay, An Inquiry into the Original of Our Idea of Beauty and Virtue (1725-6), Hutcheson attempted to prove that there is an "internal sense" of public spirit in people's hearts, unrelated to their own self-interest (6)

Some of Hutcheson's most demonstrative examples, however, accidentally reinscribe ideals of self-interest. In a revealing passage, Hutcheson considers how the British might react to events similar to the American revolution:

And further, let us make a supposition, which perhaps is not far from a matter of fact, to try if we cannot approve even disadvantageous actions,

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Ferguson's "Religious Voices" in the Cambridge History of American Literature. Historians such as Jack Greene and John Diggins temper these arguments with an emphasis on the protection of private interest as the guiding force behind the Revolution. Whether the evangelical rhetoric of Edwardsian theology was partially responsible for the American Revolution is not an issue I wish to consider here, but, as Conforti points out, it is clear that Samuel Hopkins, a disciple of Edwards, refined Edwards's definition of "virtue" with social action in mind--the abolition of the slave trade in Newport, Rhode Island (Samuel Hopkins 6, 123).

and perceive the moral good in them. A few ingenious artisans, persecuted in their own country, flee to ours for protection, they instruct us in manufactures which support millions of poor, increase the wealth of almost every person in the state, and make us formidable to our enemies. In a nation not far from us, some resolute burgomasters, full of love for their country, and compassion toward their fellow citizens, oppressed in body and soul by a tyrant and inquisition, with indefatigable diligence, publick spirit, and courage, support a tedious and perilous war against a tyrant, and form an industrious republic, which rivals us in trade and almost in power. All the world sees whether the former or the latter have been more advantageous to us; and yet every man consult his own breast, which of the two characters he has the most agreeable idea of; whether the useful refugee of the publick-spirited burgomaster, by whose love to his own country, we have often suffered in our own interests. (117)

Hutcheson offers this fable as an instance of an intuitive sense of virtuous conduct which all people share, regardless of whose interests are at stake. But it is also clear that the very people we are to admire, these “publick-spirited burgomasters,” are an industrious people busy practicing the mechanics of self-interest themselves.

The Scottish philosophers and rhetoricians who came after Hutcheson never entirely repudiated the motives of self-interest, but Hutcheson’s writings on disinterested benevolence nonetheless provoked a new direction in the teleology of British and American rhetoric.<sup>15</sup> Once the psychology of benevolence was established, the principles of civic oratory became much more important. The Common Sense philosophers following Hutcheson articulated a complex rhetorical aesthetic whose goal was to both propound and awaken the benevolent spirit of the commonwealth’s citizens.

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For Hutcheson’s interest in economic theory, see William Scott’s Francis Hutcheson (1900) and William L. Taylor’s Francis Hutcheson and David Hume as Predecessors to Adam Smith (1965).

With a palpable degree of nostalgia for the Aristotelian connections between human psychology, rhetoric, and politics, Hutcheson turns at the end of his treatise to civic oratory as the means of awaking the “moral sense” of a nation:

Now the passions which the orator attempts to raise, are all founded on moral qualities. All the bold metaphors, or descriptions, all the artificial manners of expostulation, arguing and addressing the audience, all the appeals to mankind, are but the more lively methods of giving the audience a stronger impression of the moral qualities of the person accus'd or defended; of the action advised or dissuaded, and all the antitheses, witticisms, all the cadences of sonorous periods, whatever inferior kind of beauty they may have separately, are of no consequence to persuade, if we neglect moving the passions by some species of morality. They may raise a little admiration of the speaker, among those who already favor his party, but they often raise contempt in his adversaries. But when you display the beneficence of any action, the good effect it shall have on the public in promoting the welfare of the innocent, and relieving the unjustly distressed, if you prove your allegations, you make every mortal approve undertaking it. When any person is to be recommended, display his humility, generosity, study of the public good, and capacity to promote it, his contempt for dangers and private pleasures; and you are sure to procure him love and esteem. If at the same time you show his distress, or the injuries he has suffered, you raise pity and every tender affection. (259-60)

In the same way Hutcheson proposes a theory of oratory naturally emanating from people's moral sense, he concludes his essay by describing a system of human rights which can be deduced from “moral sense”: perfect rights, imperfect rights, and external rights. These liberal rights, emerging from the moral sense, provide him with the matrix for a moral calculus, anticipating utilitarianism, through which to define the proper scope of government and the rights of citizens to revolt. In Hutcheson's system, the orator is the central agent of political homeostasis, balancing the forces of moral principle, personal right, and governmental law. Although fallible, the orator harmonizes these different value

systems within a single discourse

For Jonathan Edwards, to rely on secular oratory, or any strictly human assessment of the general welfare, was heresy. Edwards' numerous references to Francis Hutcheson in The Nature of True Virtue indicate how much Edwards' essay was directly responding to Hutcheson's theories. Hutcheson's work threatened Edwards because, except for a brief mention of God at the end of his treatise, Hutcheson's work is primarily rationalist: all man's inclination toward "disinterested" behavior is described without reference to God. Edwards believed the school of British rationalism (particularly Shaftsbury, whose "prejudice" against religion even Hutcheson apologizes for (Inquiry xix)) had created a highly dangerous explanation of the human moral sense--it wasn't derived from God; it was "natural."<sup>16</sup> For Edwards, "natural" reason is finally insufficient. Without faith in God, human reason has no proper telos.

Edwards' main concern in The Nature of True Virtue (1755, published 1765) is to argue that Hutcheson's "moral sense" is really a lower form of virtue, and that Hutcheson's examples of disinterested benevolence are really "instincts" and "self-loves" in disguise. For Edwards, "true virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to being in general" (8). Edwards' apparently loose definition, "benevolence to being in general," is deliberate. He seeks to outflank Hutcheson by demonstrating that Hutcheson's notion of the "general welfare" is too narrow. Edwards reasons that since only God can

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Conrad Wright has described Edwards's posture toward the Natural Religion movement as "supernatural rationalism"--the belief that men's reason itself was insufficient and needed to submit to the mysteries of God's will (Liberal 1-41).

comprehend the infinite expanse of the universe, any definition of the “general welfare” that doesn’t acknowledge God’s omnipotence can only claim a limited, and thus subordinate, degree of benevolence. After establishing that God comprehends the furthest scope of the “general” welfare, Edwards concludes that human benevolence is subordinate to the benevolence of God (15)

Edwards’ also aestheticizes his definition of virtue, locating it primarily in a “relish” of the heart toward God’s infinite being:

For as God is infinitely the greatest Being, so he is allowed to be the most beautiful and excellent: and all the beauty to be found throughout the whole creation, is but the reflection of the diffused beams of that Being who hath infinite fulness of brightness and glory [ . . . ] Therefore, he that has true virtue, consisting in benevolence to being in general, and in benevolence to virtuous being, must necessarily have a supreme love to God, both of benevolence and complacence (18)

Edwards outmaneuvers Hutcheson by extending the bounds of “disinterested benevolence” beyond men to God. Edwards likens the rationalists’ celebration of mortal benevolence to worshipping a “prince” instead of the “lawful sovereign” (22-23). Edwards concedes, however, that the inferior virtues of secular reason, conscience, moral sense, and self-love, are nonetheless useful in teaching people how to appreciate true virtue through the “association of ideas” (45). In other words, Edwards largely adopted Hutcheson’s architecture of moral conduct and put it under theological supervision.

Samuel Hopkins, Edwards’ friend and disciple, believed that his mentor had unintentionally validated the practice of subordinate virtue. The relationship between mortal conduct and divine obligation in Edwards’ system was still unclear. The problem, as Joseph Conforti describes it, was that “while Edwards had denied the rationalists’

contention that natural man was capable of true virtue, he had nonetheless conferred theological legitimacy on natural principles” (Conforti, Samuel 116). Furthermore, by accepting Hutcheson’s continuum of greater and lesser virtues, Edwards left the door open to those who hadn’t actively committed themselves to God. In Edwards’ system, complacent sinners might contemplate true virtue from afar without active piety, reassuring themselves that the perception of true virtue was almost as good as practicing it. Edwards’ lasting achievement in American theology was to emphasize the spiritual quality of “benevolence,” but at the same time, he had not specified what role the inferior virtues played in bringing people to true holiness, and where “half-awakened” sinners stood in relation to true virtue.

Hopkins’ Inquiry into the Nature of True Holiness is an attempt to remedy what he felt were confusing aspects of Edwards’ doctrines. Ironically agreeing with Hutcheson, Hopkins simply asserts that true virtue is unselfishness--no act of self-interest can manifest true virtue. Although Hopkins’ radical ideals of “disinterested benevolence” were thought fanatically spiritual throughout his own time, they had the paradoxical function of secularizing Edwards’ theology through an emphasis on the social manifestation of virtue in civil conduct. For Edwards, virtue is a private matter between the individual heart and God. For Hopkins, it is primarily social--true virtue is love toward “God and neighbors” (14 emphasis mine). Like Hutcheson, Hopkins subordinates all forms of love to benevolence, (namely, the lesser loves of complacency, esteem, and gratitude), and argues that true love for God and men are the same thing. Hopkins thus recuperates the disinterested republican citizen for Calvinism: “He whose regard to himself and his own

interest does not arise from selfishness, but general benevolence, is ready to give up his own personal good for the sake of the whole, he desires no good for himself unless consistent with the common good" (25)

Hopkins defines holiness in explicitly republican terms. His tract is filled with concrete examples of judges espousing the causes of the "widow and fatherless," of the rich man who destroys his own house to prevent the entire city from burning, of the importance of loving one's enemies, and of God's sacrifice of his own son (30-50). If the proof of Edwards' virtue is relish of the heart, Hopkins' is personal sacrifice. In a later essay, A Dialogue Between a Calvinist and a Semi-Calvinist, Hopkins made his controversial claim that the truly virtuous are the people who would sacrifice everlasting life for God's glory: "he therefore cannot know that he loves God and shall be saved until he knows he has that disposition which implies a willingness to be damned, if it be not most for the glory of God that he should be saved" (qtd in Conforti, Samuel 120)

Far from a doctrine of otherworldly contemplation, Hopkins' definition of holiness provided the theological background for the activist postures of nineteenth-century evangelical Calvinism, particularly in the Abolition movement. Although admittedly idealistic, Hopkins' work had enormous influence on American divines inside and outside of his sect, affirming the doctrines of benevolence simultaneously promoted by Whitefield, Wesley and the Quakers, and even impressing the future Unitarian, William Ellery Channing (Patterson; Edgell).<sup>17</sup> Coupled with a strong belief in human agency to initiate

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For an alternative explanation of Hopkins' influence on Channing, see Conrad Wright (Liberal 25).

the millennium, benevolence was a radicalizing force. Hopkins' beliefs led him to controversial positions in his parish, such as his bold denunciations of the slave trade in Newport.

The re-definition of "virtue" by Hopkins in the late eighteenth century had two significant consequences for American rhetoric. First, it promoted the Edwardsian identification of virtue with spiritual obligation. Duty to God was unmediated and direct. Second, Hopkins defined this obligation as direct action in the world, not a feeling of heart. Although Hopkins and Edwards were hardly influential rhetoricians, except by example, their beliefs about "virtuous" conduct greatly influenced the object and definition of what an American orator should do. In terms of understanding the mechanics of successful oratory, however, Americans looked for instruction to England.

### **The Rhetoric of Dissent**

The rhetoric that the American colonists adopted from Britain came from two sources, Scottish rhetorical theory and the British elocution movement. Neither are well known for fostering radical political doctrines, but both carried subversive elements. British elocution promoted a language of active republican dissent which was easily appropriated by pre- and post-Revolutionary American orators and pamphleteers. The Scottish rhetoricians, also sympathetic to the language and principles of republican society, validated inspired political rhetoric with the aesthetic codes of the sublime. But even within the confines of Common Sense moderation, the sublime became a more and more unruly discourse toward the end of the eighteenth century, contributing to the

radicalization of American evangelical rhetoric

Current research on British rhetoric of the late eighteenth century has identified three basic movements: theories of neo-classical elocution (Ward, Blackwell, and elocution texts), rhetorics of belle-letters and taste (Kames, Blair, Alison), and rhetorics of psychology (Priestley, Campbell) (Johnson Rhetoric; Golden and Corbett). These categories can be misleading, however. For example, Lord Kames' belletristic Elements of Criticism (1762) and Campbell's psychological Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776) shared important similarities. Their texts treated classical oratory and belle-letters at the same time, seldom making hard distinctions between the two genres.<sup>18</sup> All eighteenth-century rhetoricians were schooled in Latin and Greek authorities and they repeated Quintilian's advice to "be virtuous" and "follow nature" with hardly a pause.

Most British rhetoricians also shared a belief that modern science was discovering the mental processes involved in oratorical persuasion. Theories of associational psychology suggested that words made an impression on the human mind. The skillful manipulation of vivid nouns and verbs, or pathetic appeals to the moral sense, could push the minds of auditors from one state of belief to another. The mind responded to words in the same way that the physical world affected the human body.

Associational psychology also suggested that successful rhetoric could provide an index of the qualities of the soul. If the mind did respond to words in the way

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Part of the novelty of the "New Rhetoric" of Hugh Blair and Joseph Campbell, however, was the rather modern advice that writers and speakers modify their delivery and appeal to different rhetorical situations (Johnson, Rhetoric). Hugh Blair is very aware that sacred oratory requires an entirely different approach than political oratory.

associational psychologists believed, then the study of rhetoric was the study of the mind. Through the comparison of numerous examples of persuasive oratory, a student could discover the mechanics of moral cognition. In this way, the study of sublime rhetoric might reveal the passageways of the human spirit.<sup>19</sup>

The belief that the mind was reciprocally conditioned and profiled by examples of powerful oratory stimulated a nascent culture industry. Arbiters of taste believed that the mental faculties could be refined through education and experience. Taste, science, and classical tradition blended in a comprehensive effort to improve human “nature.” At stake was an attempt to mold human nature, not simply copy it. Like women’s conduct books of the period, British rhetorics offered paradoxical instructions: they exhorted students to act naturally, but at the same time, they codified a complex system of rules to modify natural behavior (Poovey; Yeazell).

The conservative impulse to regulate “natural” expression through rhetorical precept is at the heart of Hugh Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle-letters (1783) and Joseph Campbell’s Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776). Both Scotsmen, Blair and Campbell’s

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For a background on the “associational psychology” school, see Monk for a discussion of the relationship of the sublime to rhetoric. Burke, for instance, attempts to connect sublime feeling to structures of the physical world, and by extension, to words that convey sublime feeling. See also David Hartley, Joseph Priestley, Joseph Campbell, and Archibald Alison. Alison, a turn-of-the-century writer, is generally labeled a belle-lettrist but he is also concerned, like Kames before him, with the psychological principles of taste. As his college journal shows, Emerson read Alison with care and part of Emerson’s fascination with oratory was due to Alison’s suggestion that the “mind” was revealed in powerful literature.

debt to Common Sense thought is well known (Golden and Corbett; Johnson, Rhetoric)<sup>20</sup>

Their texts became the central rhetorical texts in American colleges from shortly after their publication through the mid-1900s (Guthrie). Blair's interests were in developing a finished style, and he devoted pages to various methods of rounding out a sentence, lessons young Ralph Waldo Emerson studied with care (Liebman; Baumgartner)

Recommending passages from Addison, Swift, and Bishop Atterbury for imitation, Blair advocated practical, middle-class prose. Blair's main object was to foster simplicity and an appreciation for moderate, refined expression. Similarly, while Campbell's preference for literary "vivaciousness" had radical aspects, the thesis of his work boils down to a dislike for the use of abstract terms. According to associational theory, general ideas call up no concrete image in the mind. To be an effective writer or speaker, Campbell believed one must pay attention to the particulars of experience: use concrete words for general ones, "officer" rather than the "law," etc. Both Blair and Campbell had moderate, middle class tastes. One searches their work in vain for explicit training in guerrilla tactics of debate or bold declarations of subversive political belief<sup>21</sup>

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Blair was a friend of Lord Kames and Adam Ferguson, and a student of Adam Smith's, whose course in rhetoric provided Blair with many of the rhetorical doctrines he would later publish as his own. Campbell, a friend of Thomas Reid and James Beattie, based his rhetoric on the principles of the "association of ideas" derived from David Hartley and David Hume. See the useful introductions to Blair and Campbell in the modern Carbondale reprints of their texts.

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In contrast, Richard Whately's Elements of Rhetoric (1822), which was very popular in the United States during the Jacksonian period, offered explicit advice to young theologians engaged in doctrinal dispute. Whately cheerfully teaches strategies of willful obfuscation, fallacious appeal, and many other underhanded techniques.

Both writers, however, were dogged by a taste for the sublime, an aesthetic principle with both radical and conservative valences. During the eighteenth century, the sublime was a battleground for contending forces of radical spiritualism and neo-classic elitism.<sup>22</sup> During the first part of the eighteenth century, the regulation of the sublime was an elitist project. To perceive the sublime, and to be educated enough to discriminate between hollow grandiloquence and genuine grandeur were the marks of a civilized education.

As the eighteenth century waned in Britain, however, the carefully orchestrated patrician discourse about the sublime became too popular for any single interest group to control. The sublime became democratized and began to spill over its discursive boundaries, reshaping the languages of aesthetics, politics, and theology. As Andrew Ashfield and Peter De Bolla have demonstrated, the sublime began to restructure its “host” discourses in aesthetics as well as political philosophy (6).<sup>23</sup> This democratization had potentially radicalizing consequences, “infecting” the integrated world view of Common Sense writers with a force difficult to control. The sublime shapes Blair and Campbell’s work as much as they attempted to regulate it.

Blair’s conservatism is evident in his attempt to control the sublime through the

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For treatments of the political functions of the sublime, see Bill Readings’s “Sublime Politics: the End of the Party Line,”; Peter De Bolla’s The Discourse of the Sublime (1989); and particularly the critical introduction to Andrew Ashfield and Peter De Bolla’s The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory (1995).

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For example, Ashfield and De Bolla point out the way tropes of ravishment and transport inform Adam Ferguson’s description of the progress of society in his Essay on the History of Civil Society (8).

careful discrimination between the pompous “sublime style” and the austere magnificence of the “true” sublime. Blaming Longinus for creating confusion between the two, Blair spends two chapters on the topic, describing the sublime in the awesome creations of nature, and defining it, in literary terms, as an expression of elevated thought and language.

The “true” sublime, however, proves even more difficult to control. Turning to pedagogical examples, Blair recommends the spiritual power of the Scriptures, and particularly, Ossian:

As autumn’s dark storms pour from two echoing hills, so toward each other approached the heroes. As two dark streams from high rocks meet and mix, and roar on the plain; loud, rough and dark, in battle, met Lochlin and Inisfail; chief mixed his strokes with chief, and man with man. Steel clanging sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft on high, blood bursts, and smokes around. As the troubled noise of the ocean when roll the waves on high, as the last peal of the thunder in heaven, such is the noise of battle. The groan of the people spread over the hills. It was like the thunder of night, when the cloud bursts on Cona, and a thousand shriek at once on the hollow wind. (l. 66-7)

Describing this passage as an instance of “conciseness and simplicity,” Blair betrays an uncharacteristic lapse of sobriety. One of the central defenders of the Ossian poems in the 1760s, Blair’s enthusiasm for the sublime seems to have impaired his critical judgement.<sup>24</sup>

Although he was a minister of moderate beliefs and conduct, Blair felt that in matters of

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Blair was one of the central defenders of the Ossian poems. His “Dissertation” on their authenticity was often published in the introductory pages of MacPherson’s poems. Blair felt that the poems of Ossian were a contribution to world literature, but he took pride in their Gaelic origins. Like many Scotsmen, Blair had some Jacobite sympathies and he was uncomfortable with the Anglicanization of the Scottish churches. See Robert M. Schmitz’s Hugh Blair. See also Chapman, “Blair on Ossian.” Review of English Studies 7 (1931): 80-83.

great importance, the sublime was an essential aid to the poet and orator. Furthermore, his spiritual and nationalist exemplars tended to politicize his recommendation of the trope. Blair concludes his discussion of the sublime with the permissive advice that “whenever a great and awful object is presented in nature, or a very magnanimous and exalted affection of the human mind is displayed, thence, if you catch the impression strongly, and exhibit it warm and glowing, you may draw on the sublime” (166-75 emphasis mine)

The disruptive power of the sublime also contributed importantly to Campbell’s theory of rhetoric. Campbell, influenced by Hume, believed that the mind worked from induction, rather than deduction, and that “thought” naturally ascended from particulars to universal concepts (62). Campbell’s philosophy stressed the use of concrete images as a means of engaging attention--the principal he advocates is “vivacity.” His recommendations for the use of tropes in Book Three are built entirely upon this theory. Sublime imagery is important to Campbell because it conveys the highest forms of struggle (life and death), and fixes attention. The sublime literally shakes the mind awake. While the program of Campbell’s rhetoric is to theorize procedures and tactics for the control of students’ oral and written expression, Campbell’s advocacy of sublime vivacity puts a potentially unstable force at the center of students’ concern. Like Blair’s work, Campbell’s can be easily described as an attempt to regulate literary behavior, but it has unruly components that potentially undermine its stability.

The tension between establishing social control and unintentionally encouraging social unrest is also evident in the British elocution movement. Beginning with John

Mason's An Essay on Elocution (1748) and Thomas Sheridan's A Course of Lectures in Elocution (1763, composed 1759) the elocution movement had a major impact on late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century American letters.<sup>25</sup> A remarkable self-promoter, Sheridan claimed that English had been destroyed by too much bookishness and advocated a return to the living language of the Greeks (xii). Frequently citing the Methodists' success in gaining converts through their use of the spoken word, Sheridan advocated the "living voice" as a means of remedying the intellectual errors of the age. Attempting to cleanse the English language of the affectations of stage speech, Sheridan argued for a harmony of belief and word. While this fundamentally conservative, neo-classical advice was hardly new, the spirit of Sheridan's lectures was liberatory and radical: erase the past and start afresh by speaking "like you believe what you say" (120).

While Sheridan was widely read in American colleges until 1800, a number of other elocution texts enjoyed an even broader American popularity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, among them, Robert Dodsley's The Preceptor (1748); James Burgh's The Art of Speaking (1761); William Enfield's The Speaker (1774); William Scott's Lessons in Elocution (1779), and John Walker's The Elements of Elocution (1781).<sup>26</sup> Elocution texts tended to function as conduct manuals and literary

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See Gordon Bigelow's compelling study of the influence of oratorical rhetoric on many poets of the early national period--Dwight, Freneau, Barlow and Humphreys.

<sup>26</sup>

See Guthrie for a useful survey of the content of these texts, and the specific colleges where they were used in America (18:20-30). Burgh, Enfield, Scott, and Walker were enormously popular in America through the first half of the nineteenth-century. Most American texts borrowed wholesale from these authors, with and without attribution.

guides for younger speakers as well as for college students. One of the most popular early texts, Dodsley's The Preceptor was aimed at younger readers, and included sections on geometry, drawing, and history, but it also included advanced literary sections. Burgh, Enfield, Scott, and Walker were used at both the common school and college levels in America from the 1780s through the first third of the nineteenth-century.

A complete art of human conduct, elocution is the quintessential form of social discipline, embracing speech, gesture, and belief. Most elocution texts stressed "following nature" through rigorous training in gesture and voice. Amplifying Mason and Sheridan's speaking advice to an astonishing level of particularity, James Burgh's Art of Speaking and John Walker's Elements of Elocution were highly influential texts that sought to micro-manage students' every emphasis. Various editions of their texts feature diagrams of the quadrants within which the hands and feet should move, and indexes of the gestures used to accompany the passions, such as, "malice sets the jaws," and "aversion pushes away with the hands." They also include practice passages decorated with sidebars and underlining to indicate when to use specific gestures and emphases. One passage from Burgh gives detailed instructions about performing the last act of Addison's Cato:

<i>Anxiety</i>	<u>This world was made for Caesar</u>
<i>Courage</i>	I'm <u>weary of conjectures--This must end them,</u> (Laying his hand on his sword)
<i>Firmness</i>	Thus I am <u>doubly armed</u> . My <u>death</u> , my <u>life</u> My <u>bane</u> and <u>antidote</u> , are <u>both</u> before me;
<i>Apprehension</i>	<u>This--in a moment</u> , brings me to and <u>end</u> .
<i>Comfort</i>	While <u>this</u> informs me, I shall <u>never die</u> .
<i>Noble</i>	The <u>soul</u> , secured in her existence, smiles
<i>Pride</i>	At the <u>drawn dagger</u> , and defies its point.
<i>Triumph</i>	The <u>stars</u> shall <u>fade away</u> , the <u>Sun himself</u> , Grow <u>dim</u> with <u>age</u> , and nature sink in <u>years</u> ;

But thou shall flourish in immortal youth  
Unhurt amidst the war of elements  
 The wreck of nature and the crush of worlds. (122)

In this short passage alone, Burgh also includes six footnotes telling students when to look upwards, when to lay their hands on their breasts, etc. A more complete system for the regulation of human discourse is hardly imaginable and yet these systems were in use as late as 1829 at Harvard, where Professor Jonathan Barber taught elocution by putting students in bamboo cages to restrict their gestures (Anderson, ed. xli).<sup>27</sup> The University of Vermont used Walker's texts through 1841, and Williams College used them through 1860 (Guthrie 18 27)

At the same time these texts disciplined gesture and speech, their reading selections sought to foster middle-class ideologies of industry, quiet piety, and civic republicanism. Writers such as Addison, Barbault, Tillotson, Chesterfield, Lyttleton, Sterne, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Goldsmith and Shakespeare appear frequently. Sandwiched among these works are more obviously oratorical selections that provide simultaneous lessons in political conduct and rhetoric. Many of the speeches are drawn from the Roman histories of Hooke, Tacitus, and Sallust, and glorify the principles of British republicanism: Romulus asking for a mixed form of government; Brutus justifying the murder of Ceasar; Cato's reply to Ceasar after the Catiline conspiracy; Canulieus speaking on behalf of marriage between plebeians and nobles; Caius Marius defending his common origins to the Romans. These selections literally force students to act out republican ideology

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<sup>27</sup> See also Jonathan Barber's text, A Grammar of Elocution New Haven: 1830.

Jay Fliegelman has argued that these oratorical selections undermined the democratization of political leadership because they offered “a newly constructed model of a commodified private self whose sincerity quotient became a new source of political legitimacy and social power” (Declaring 189-90). Fliegelman’s observation is persuasive--combined with the conservative advice of Addison and Pope, these texts ritualized a literature of possessive individualism. In American common schools after 1776, students mimed republican passages at quarterly exhibitions for their approving parents, where the Roman arguments implicitly justified the Revolutionary war. Like young Emerson, most American schoolchildren (and many young women included) hungered for an opportunity to strike an audience dumb with sublime grandeur. They were performing within social norms, not threatening to change them.

But the speaking selections in these texts modeled a strong form of radical republicanism and a language of righteous dissent that resisted simple patriotic containment. Although most remain within the bounds of “dissenting” liberal ideology, these speeches obliged their students to cherish dramatic combat. The Roman selections show people demanding their political rights as citizens of the republic, and, prior to the Revolution, the expression of these rights led to genuinely subversive consequences in the British colonies. In the aftermath of the Revolution, as Federalists sought to consolidate the social order, republican stump orators criticized the monied interests of the new nation as if they were attacking British monarchy. Many of the Founding Fathers, such as John Adams, who had initially looked with fondness upon the radical speeches of James Otis and Joseph Warren, began to regret the cacophony of oppositional oratory which

developed during 1780s and 90s

Training students in dissent had unpredictable consequences. At colleges, students created their own compositions built on the imitation of classical models and sought to extend republican ideals to the unsettled controversies of their day. Furthermore, college literary societies glorified social debate as the proper philosophical and literary training for young citizens. At the same time, evangelical Methodism and Calvinism encouraged students to speak out and act upon their spiritual beliefs. Steeped in these two traditions, the cohort of students educated between 1776 and 1820 were armed, rhetorically and spiritually, for ideological combat, not simply grudging assent.

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In the United States, the confluence of three forces drastically re-shaped the “commodified private self” inherited from British rhetoric: evangelism, the literary sublime, and republican dissent. As I have demonstrated, New Divinity theologians materialized the Edwardsian ideal of “true virtue” in social relations. They raised Hutcheson’s portrayals of human benevolence to a divine level, subordinating the industrious burgomaster’s property rights to the spiritual obligations of the coming millennium. In Hopkins’ theology, we admire the republican burgomasters not for business acumen, but for their willingness to burn down their own houses for the sake of others. At the same time, human benevolence acquired an oratorical manifestation in the principles of British rhetoric. Sublime declamation and republican principles fostered a code of oratorical conduct which was easily adapted to the framework of evangelical devotion. Together, the result was a spiritualization of the republican orator and a

glorification of the language of selfless dissent. In my next chapter, I show how this synthesis was reflected in the literary doctrines of a central school text of the early republic, The Columbian Orator

## Chapter 2

### The Active Virtue of The Columbian Orator

In a well known passage describing his early education, Frederick Douglass identifies a book he read while still a slave in Baltimore that enabled him, in his words, “to utter my thoughts and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery”

(Narrative 279) The text was Caleb Bingham’s The Columbian Orator (1797)<sup>28</sup> Recent scholarship has briefly considered its influence on Douglass and has also discussed it as a

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The most detailed source of biographical information on Bingham is William Fowle’s 1858 “Memoir of Caleb Bingham...” See Crosby, Heck, Johannesen and Camp for supplement. Several short letters of Bingham’s are published in the Memoirs of a fellow Dartmouth student, the notorious Stephen Burroughs. Bingham’s extensive editorial comments also appear in the 1811 Albany version of Burroughs’ Memoirs (Fowle 341), reissued by Northeastern University Press in 1988. For early national school and schoolbook history, see Littlefield (1904), Johnson (1917), Lyman (1921), Fell (1941), Nietz (1961), Carpenter (1963), and Belok (1973). The best interpretive work is Ruth Elson’s Guardians of Tradition (1964). Elson discusses the way schoolbooks fostered ideologies of race, gender, nationalism and family.

The only contemporary review of the Orator I have been able to locate is an anonymous review in the Gazette of the United States, Nov. 29, 1800: 3. The text is noteworthy coming from an arch-Federalist paper, hostile to ideals of the democratic-republicans: “This useful volume, compiled by Caleb Bingham, contains upwards of eighty pieces [invented?] and original. The selections are confessedly judicious, and exhibits [sic] some of the finest specimens of ancient and modern oratory. It is in the latter that Mr. Bingham has shown much judgement, and given proof of fine taste, by preserving many celebrated speeches of French and British orators, at present on the theater of action; and employed in the discussion of subjects, which are really interesting to their contemporaries in life. The Americans also come in for their debit of classical honors; and such selections have been made from the annual orators of the 4th of July as cannot fail to please. A very eloquent, elegant and beautiful discourse of President Maxcy enriches the work. The dialogues are mostly original. The far greater part of them are fine compositions, whether the value of composition is determined by purity of language, or excellence of sentiments. Some of these are not inferior, in the acumen of polished wit, to any pieces on familiar subjects, which have come from the pens of the most celebrated authors. But that which stamps them really superior in point of merit, to the general [dr?]ift of dialogues, is, they are calculated, without exception, to impress some valuable and important moral lessons.”

typical anthology of its era<sup>29</sup> But the most important, and under-appreciated, characteristic of The Columbian Orator is the way it presented social reform as a spiritual obligation and a literary practice. Widely sold, and curiously radical in its advocacy of social equality and conscientious political dissent, the Orator encouraged generations of American students, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Horace Greeley, to speak and to write in a tradition of non-conformist activism<sup>30</sup>

As an educational text, Bingham's Orator was most important for the way it used the language of secular and religious dissent to introduce students to what "good" literature was. Featuring many examples of dialogue, polemic, and declaration where

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Most Douglass scholarship refers to The Columbian Orator in passing but see esp Blassingame (xxii-xxiii), Preston (98-100), Stone (18-19), Baker, Journey (38-9), Fishkin and Peterson (189-204), Ziolkowsky (162-3), and Cheyfitz (Poetics 33, 127-35). For the Orator's general context in nineteenth-century literature, see Cmeil (55-94), C Davidson (55-79), and Gustafson (69-116).

<sup>30</sup>

Many children educated in New England schools from 1800-1820 studied from Bingham's anthologies. Emerson's familiarity with the Orator is evident in a fragment from one of its original poems he quotes in a letter to a friend (Letters 17). Harriet Beecher Stowe records the Orator as one of the central schoolbooks during her youth in Litchfield. (Poganuc People 151). Elsewhere in the United States, Bingham's texts, and versions of them, were legion. In the south, the Orator was still popular in the late 1850s when several articles in De Bow's Review protested its anti-slavery views. See De Bow's Review 20 (1856): 67-79; 21 (1856): 650-659; 28 (1860): 434-440. Constance Rourke points out that Horace Greeley was greatly influenced by the text as a child (Trumpets). Kenneth Cmeil, drawing on a biography by Stephen Oates, reports that Abraham Lincoln read The Columbian Orator in his youth (59). I can find no corroboration of this by other historians. Several sources do assert, however, that Lincoln studied Scott's Lessons in Elocution and The Kentucky Preceptor (Beveridge 75; Herndon 42). The Kentucky Preceptor draws its republican spirit as well as some introductory phrases from Bingham's first anthology, The American Preceptor.

belle-lettres and oppositional politics coincide. The Columbian Orator promoted literature as a form of social action. The Orator not only taught students how to declare and persuade--it specifically encouraged them to use those tools in theology and politics. Whereas many other nineteenth-century American schoolbooks taught the rhetoric of dissent to advance a subtle array of bourgeois values, the Orator's stoical and communitarian Calvinism was boldly critical of the self-interested quotient of economic liberalism.

A staunch Jeffersonian republican and practicing Congregationalist (Fowle 344-5), Bingham urged his students to speak actively on behalf of their spiritual and political beliefs. The salient features of his anthologies--their commitment to racial and social egalitarianism, their custom-written dialogues, and their portrayals of citizens in the act of conscientious speech--taught that virtue was manifested in speech and action, not simply in patriotic industry. Although Bingham's Orator was not radical in the sense that it called for changes in social relations beyond the terms of the American revolution, it was an attempt to conserve volatile aspects of revolutionary ideology that the authors of most American (and British) textbooks carefully tried to subdue.<sup>31</sup> Like Noah Webster, who believed the diversity of republican opinions needed to be regulated by a general concept

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The secondary school readers written after Bingham's death in 1817, such as John Pierpont's American First-Class Reader (1823) or his National Reader (1827), mark a steady withdrawal from the revolutionary ideology Bingham sought to conserve. By the publication of the McGuffey Reader series in the late 1830s, almost all activist sentiment had been expurgated from high school readers in favor of an antiquarian respect for "vaguely defined" early American keywords like "liberty," "the Declaration," or the "Constitution" (Elson 295).

of morality. Bingham proclaimed the importance of training students in the ways of virtue. But unlike Webster, Bingham believed in righteous declaration, not industrious conformity. Bingham's popularization of the active virtues of speech in The Columbian Orator proved a resilient legacy of Jeffersonian idealism in American literature and politics.

### **The Control of Virtue**

The task which Noah Webster and Caleb Bingham faced as pioneers of American school texts was finding ways to control the centrifugal forces of American "freedom" and "liberty." Both writers established such forms of control through ideals of oratory, virtue, and nation. Noah Webster, a child of conservative parents, believed in respect for one's elders and obedience to rhetorical and political law. His anthologies, despite their stridently nationalistic tone, reflected the classist and royalist orientation of his English sources. In this sense, his patriotic educational philosophy was often at variance with his pedagogical techniques. Caleb Bingham's upbringing was also conservative, but significantly different. Bingham believed that virtue was manifested in a commitment to faith rather than in obedient complacency. Both anthologists developed an elaborate pedagogical system based on the dictates of virtue, but Bingham's radically spiritual creed was openly hostile to parochial ideas of "proper" conduct, white supremacy, and American nationalism.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, secondary school anthologies formed the core of an American literary education that combined the skills of speech, writing, and reading. Although most textbooks offered brief digests of the

rhetorical advice of Hugh Blair and Joseph Campbell, the majority of literary instruction was not of a theoretical nature<sup>32</sup> Students learned the rudiments of style by physically copying Addison-esque paragraphs from their readers, as Ben Franklin recommends in his Autobiography. The mending of student pens took up much of the teachers' time and books were scarce (Littlefield 94). Because of such impediments teachers often had their students speak their lessons aloud (Johnson, Old Time 115). Sometimes called "blab" schools, the average academy taught literary skills through the rote memorization and recitation of famous speeches from school readers (Oates 10). Because so few Americans sought higher education--even as late as 1850, only 1 out of 67 school-age whites went to college--school readers provided the last stage of most Americans' formal education (Barnard 14). Other than the Bible, school texts were the only literature most Americans actually studied<sup>33</sup>

Beyond their literary function, school texts also provided social and moral training

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See Guthrie for an overview of English rhetorical theory as practiced in American colleges before 1850. For his work on Blair and Campbell see especially (15 61-71). Nan Johnson and Kenneth Cmeil have richly extended this work. See also Barron, Simpson, Kramer, Gustafson, and Halloran and Clarke, for detailed studies of influential rhetoricians and cultural rhetoric.

<sup>33</sup>

Educational statistics for the period differ widely. Debow's 1850 census reports a total population of 23,191,876. Of that, 4,089,507 were in "school" and 27,159 were in college (ix, lix, lxi). For any year in school, however, the days of attendance were few: The Report of the U.S. Commissioner of Education for 1900-1901 reported that in 1800, Americans spent an average of only 82 days of their lives in school. By 1840 it increased to a mere 208 days per lifetime (Fishlow 42).

The first American reader, Noah Webster's 1785 American Selection<sup>34</sup>, was derived from English conduct manuals like The Young Gentleman and Lady's Monitor, and from a series of American religious texts modeled on The New England Primer (Belok 47-56)<sup>35</sup>. Both of these sources had the goal of training students to behave properly. As vehicles for socialization, school readers' main object was to provide educators with a means of discipline and control, and elocution--a generic union of physical conduct and linguistic expression--played a key role in this education.

Like his English peers, Webster used oratory as a tool to bind the philosophy, social practices, and literature of the middle-class into an organic unity. Imitating his sources in Robert Dodsley's The Preceptor, James Burgh's The Art of Speaking, William Enfield's The Speaker, and William Scott's Lessons in Elocution, Webster sandwiched selections of classical oratory between conduct advice from Addison and Chesterfield to present the Roman orators as the heralds of middle-class ideology: people should be

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Webster's American Selection, first called "Part III" of his Grammatical Institute, had many variants but four basic versions: (1785 Hartford); (1787 Philadelphia, with geography and many documents of the American revolution); (1788 Hartford, with geography); (1795 Hartford, without geography). The first two were published only once. The last two were published concurrently by many printers. Despite significant differences I will comment on later, they all included roughly the same "Lessons in Speaking," histories, dialogues and moral fables. Unless otherwise stated, in this paper I discuss the version Webster used to compete with Bingham: the 1795 Hartford. In the early 1800s even this version underwent some modifications--accounts of exotic European markets and mines appear in the 1804 New Haven--but the political message, however attenuated, was the same.

<sup>35</sup>

Primers contained a mix of alphabet, catechism, hymns and Biblical history for beginning students. The earliest extant copy is by Benjamin Harris in 1691. It took a variety of names in later years such as The New York Primer, The American Primer, The Columbian Primer, The Franklin Primer, and The Evangelical Primer (Johnson, Old Time 72, 94).

measured by their deeds rather than their birth, and their deeds had better seem upper-class and noble. Although some of Webster's oratorical selections are open to potentially counter-cultural interpretations, copious excerpts from writers such as Addison and Steele helped steer students toward less provocative readings. For example, Brutus and Cassius's curiously homoerotic dispute from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (a popular excerpt in many school texts) illustrates the dangers of envy and faction and the importance of making up as friends. Training in oratory thus provided a complex integration of the society's expressive, behavioral and philosophic priorities.

Webster's unique contribution to American pedagogy, however, was his promotion of patriotic oratory as America's finest literature. Webster recommended Revolutionary oratory for both its ideological content and its stylistic beauty:

In the choice of pieces, I have been attentive to the political interest of America. I consider it as a capital fault in all our schools, that the books generally used contain subjects wholly uninteresting to our youth; while the writings that marked the revolution, which are not inferior in any respect to the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes, and which are calculated to impress interesting truths upon young minds, lie neglected and forgotten. Several of those masterly addresses of Congress, written at the commencement of the late revolution, contain such noble sentiments of liberty and patriotism, that I cannot help wishing to transfuse them into the breasts of the rising generation. (I)

Webster's advocacy of political oratory as the native form of American literature explicitly proposed students' literary talents be bent toward a nationalist telos. Because of Webster's American Selection (and the efforts of the Tammany Society and others), Washington's addresses and July 4th speeches became a primary staple of American school children until Daniel Webster and Edward Everett's speeches gradually replaced

them in the 1820s

But Webster's declaration of literary independence retained many important beliefs of British Whiggery. Webster's recommendation of the "interesting truths" of Cicero and Demosthenes advanced the same ideological agenda shared by English authors. Fisher Ames's famous speech on behalf of Jay's treaty, inserted into editions of Webster's American Selection after 1796, was a triumph of pro-British Federalism. Warren and Hancock, whose memorial speeches on the Boston Massacre appeared in every edition of Webster's anthology, cited the justice of British law as grounds for American revolt. Despite anti-monarchist content of these selections, their classist emphasis on the rights of propertied men also sustained a Commonwealth elitism.

Webster's British inheritance is reflected in his use of generic headings, such as "narratives," "dialogues" and "eloquence," and in the "rules for speaking" he borrowed from Dodsley and Burgh. Of course, generic categories helped students grasp principles of literary decorum and genre. They also implied, however, a literary hierarchy based in the topoi of social stratification. Like many Federalists, Webster wished to banish the monarchy but not the aristocracy of talent it stood for. Obedience to the rules of oratory provided a subtle indoctrination to the rule of cultured men. Like Burgh and Walker's, Webster's "rules for speaking" were rigorously detailed.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, the strident nationalism of Webster's early work was complicated by his social, economic, and

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Webster's rather mechanical advice to unite gesture and word (ie: "malice...sets the jaws") was drawn from Burgh and Walker, who in turn, drew from John Mason's An Essay on Elocution (1748), and Thomas Sheridan's A Course of Lectures on Elocution, given as lectures in 1759 and later published in 1763 (Guthrie 18: 23-25).

pedagogical affiliations with English custom. And concerning his understanding of social virtue, Webster shared much in common with the British middle-class disciples of Addison.<sup>37</sup>

As historians of the late eighteenth century have recently pointed out, a concern with “virtue” was at the center of a struggle between classical republican political thought and liberal economic theory.<sup>38</sup> The classical republican view defined virtue as the disinterested civic duty practiced by a “Roman patriot, self defined in his civic sphere of action” (Pocock 69). At the same time, however, the commercial middle-class began to develop a corollary view of virtue associated with the codes of conduct described in Addison’s Spectator. This second form, what might be called mannered virtue, grew around a variety of social codes concerning work, manners and sexuality. Derived from French and English conduct books that attempted to codify the behavior of a “disinterested” citizens, these behavioral principles became ends in themselves for middle-

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For more on Addison and regularization of the middle-class, see Edward and Lillian Bloom’s useful book, Joseph Addison’s Social Animal.

<sup>38</sup>

Gordon Wood’s discussion of virtue in The Creation of the American Republic prompted extensive analysis including Pocock Virtue; Diggins, Kramnick, “Republican,” “Great.”; Banning; Greene; Appleby; Shalhope; Bertoff; R. Bloch; and Wood, Radicalism. My account of the synthesis of the republican and mannered virtues draws heavily from Pocock and R. Bloch. As MacIntyre points out, even the Greek word for “public virtue,” arete, changed meaning from Homer to Aristotle (120-164). In the eighteenth-century, Hume also recognized different types of “public virtue”: “the characters of Caesar and Cato, as drawn by Sallust, are both of them virtuous, but different in a way [...] the one produces love, the other esteem; the one is amiable, the other awful” (362-3).

class strivers<sup>39</sup>. Although the historiography varies among different social groups and contexts (such as the correspondence of virtue with chastity in the novel), toward the end of the eighteenth century, even portraits of civic virtue took on "mannered" connotations. School texts described the virtue of leading citizens through their demeanor rather than their politics.

Most early American anthologies included illustrations of both civic and mannered virtue but the majority tended to accent the mannered virtues.<sup>40</sup> Webster, siding with the Federalists in the aftermath of Shay's Rebellion, claimed in his 1787 edition of An American Selection that since republican virtue was virtually dead in the public mind, the only way to control the social decline posed by self-interest was through "manners, which are the basis of government" (214).<sup>41</sup> Even as he celebrated the radical oratory of the

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As Garry Will points out in Cincinnatus, even George Washington laboriously studied a handbook of these rules, which offered advice such as not "to scratch" at any private part of the body in polite company.

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Following Webster's precedent, see the emphasis on mannered restraint in Milcah Moore's Miscellanies (1787); Donald Fraser's Young Gentleman and Lady's Assistant (1791) and Columbian Monitor (1794); Joseph Dana's A New American Selection (1792); SG's A New Introduction to Reading (1793); Caleb Alexander's Introduction to Speaking and Writing (1794) and The Young Gentleman and Lady's Instructor (1797); and John Wood's Mentor (1795). One exception, Alexander Thomas's Orator's Assistant (1797), conveys an activist philosophy similar to Bingham's but the text did not see republication according to Evans's American Bibliography.

<sup>41</sup>

By manners, Webster means the austere Connecticut manners of his childhood, not the Frenchified affectations of "mannered" conduct which most Americans saw as a source of corruption. See the satire of Chesterfield's French mannerisms in Webster's "Chesterfield and Cicero" dialogue. Paradoxically, Webster endorsed Chesterfield's behavioral maxims in many editions of his Selection.

American patriots. Webster emphasized that virtue was found in obedience, industry, and mannered restraint. Many schoolbook writers of the nineteenth century followed Webster's precedent.

An alternative idea of virtue was promoted by the Christian radicalism of The Columbian Orator. Steeped in the Edwardsian Congregationalism of his mentor, Eleazar Wheelock, Bingham taught that virtue was the personal act of will through which people manifested their communitarian impulses (Heimert 108-110, 312). Although this virtue had republican connotations, it promoted the republican civic ideal without the elitism so often evident in Jeffersonian rhetoric (Appleby 79n). Bingham's goal was to train all students, propertied or not, to express themselves in the service of community. But it would be a mistake to associate these democratic and egalitarian aspects of New Light Calvinism with the rhetoric of individualist freedom. To act with virtue in a New Light framework was a heroic and rigorous social responsibility. It required unceasing activity, conceiving of liberty not as "doing what one pleases" within a framework of individual liberal rights but rather "the opportunity to act morally" (Heimert 457). For Bingham, free and virtuous expression--one of the central "RIGHTS OF MAN" so ostentatiously proclaimed in The Columbian Orator--was a spiritual duty, not a possession.

Thus the virtues publicized by Webster and Bingham entailed very different forms of control. Webster, like many later anthologists of the nineteenth-century, thought of virtue as a kind of quiet self-possession and oratory as something to be venerated rather than imitated. Bingham conceived of virtue as the vocal and physical activity necessary to bring about a New Jerusalem. This concept of virtue, though placing strict demands upon

its subjects, was based in the expression of a utopian future rather than in the preservation of the past. The hopeful and strident energy of Bingham's orators resists simple patriotic containment because of its disruptive excess.

### **Active Virtue**

From a modern perspective, it is easy to overlook the reasons why Bingham's Orator was such a popular text. Containing speeches from Greek, Roman, British, French, and American political history, dramatic excerpts and adaptations, and several millennially-charged sermons and religious selections, the Orator seems a rather unremarkable vehicle of piety, patriotism, and Enlightened republicanism. Even its strong anti-slavery sentiments can be found in other English and American school books prior to 1820 (Elson 65-90). But Bingham's Columbian Orator and his earlier American Preceptor (1794) were among the best-selling and longest-lived American school texts of the early nineteenth century, republished as late as 1875 (Camp 89). The Columbian Orator was a standard American secondary school text from the late 1790s to 1820. It sold 200,000 copies by 1832 and served as a central model for many imitators (Littlefield 156).<sup>42</sup> The Orator sold well because Bingham preferred dramatic dialogue to didactic narrative and because his text also included more religious selections than the competition (Fowle 339;

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<sup>42</sup>

The American Preceptor sold 640,000 copies by 1832 (Littlefield 156). Sales figures for Bingham's texts are probably low; apparently Bingham cared little for business and sold permission to publish rather than take royalty fees (Fowle). Bingham's main competition was Lindley Murray's English Reader series, which may have sold one or two million in the United States (Lyman 80). Lyman's sales figures for Murray's readers are questionable because he seems to have been combined Lindley's Reader with his English Grammar series.

Shoemaker 152-175)<sup>43</sup> The passion Bingham brought to his anthologies, derived from his exposure to evangelical Calvinism and Revolutionary rhetoric, explains not only the source of Bingham's popularity but the conjunction of his literary and political visions.

The Columbian Orator foregrounds the disruptive potential of language by emphasizing the active characteristics of speech in both literal and metaphoric ways. In the introduction Bingham draws attention to the classical belief that "action," or pronunciation, is the primary means to "success in the art of persuasion" (7). The classical meanings of this term, however, were notoriously subtle--action also refers to the gestures and tones of a speaker's performance.<sup>44</sup> Bingham invokes this tradition with a quotation from Cicero which argues that "truth" sometimes needs ornament to be persuasive: "It is certain that truth (by which [Cicero] means nature) in everything excels imitation; but if that were sufficient of itself in action, we should have no occasion for art" (10 italics mine). The ambiguity of the word "action" in this passage--referring simultaneously to "principle," "practice," "gesture" and "pronunciation,"--explicitly connects the stylistic delivery of speech with its practical consequences. The active pronunciation of speech is a metaphor for the social efficacy of oratory, where speech itself functions as an action

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<sup>43</sup>

Noah Webster declined from using religious material in his readers arguing it was a "prostitution of divine truth for secular purposes" (1785, I). His sales lapsed as a result.

<sup>44</sup>

Both John Mason and Thomas Sheridan, key sources of eighteenth-century theories of gesture and verbal performance, were frustrated by the ambiguous use of the word "action" in classical literature. For pedagogical purposes they tried to restrict its meaning to refer only to gesture, although they both acknowledged it meant more than that to the ancients. Note the influence of "action" on Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776) which describes vivacity as one of the primary means of powerful expression.

through its declarative force. For Bingham, as well as for his revolutionary peers, spoken words were deeds.<sup>45</sup>

Bingham's portrayal of Cato the Younger in The Columbian Orator is a prime example of speakerly action. The Columbian Orator draws on two myths of Cato. The first is Cato's opposition to Caesar's dictatorship, influential in both Britain and America following the publication of Addison's Cato in 1713. Although Addison deliberately fashioned the play so it would carry no subversive allegory, to Americans of the 1760s the play justified the Revolution against Britain. As Fredric Litto has shown, revisions of Addison's play by Patrick Henry and Nathan Hale became part of American political and literary traditions of defiance (445-6). Bingham also contributes to the radical appropriation of Cato by adding an epilogue which unites the words of oratory with the deeds of revolution: "Rise! then my countryman, for fight to prepare: / Gird on your swords and rush fearless to war" (69). As soldiers are aware, military commands are deeds. Bingham's portrayals of the illocutionary force of language are also evident in Napoleon's declaration of freedom to conquered Italy and in Cassius's declaration to his armies after the death of Caesar (136-142). In these selections speech declares social change.

But the most intriguing literary actions in The Columbian Orator are those that don't rely on the sword for efficacy. The Orator begins with an epigraph from one of Rollin's histories which points to the other myth of Cato, his reputation for eloquent

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See Jay Fliegelman's Declaring Independence for a study of Jefferson's concern with the performative dimension of the Declaration.

wisdom “Cato cultivated ELOQUENCE, as a necessary mean[s] for defending the Rights of the People, and for enforcing good counsel.” Bingham illustrates this quotation by including Cato's famous attack on private interest in the Catiline conspiracy (as recorded by Sallust). Criticizing the euphemisms of Rome's corrupt politicians Cato self-reflexively proposes an alternative model of speech and conduct.<sup>46</sup>

At such time, in such a state, some talk to us of lenity and compassion. It is long that we have lost the right name of things. The Commonwealth is in this deplorable situation, only because we call bestowing other people's estates, liberality, and audaciousness in perpetrating crimes, courage [ . . . ] For these virtues, we have luxury and avarice; or madness to squander, joined with no less to gain; the State is poor and private men are rich. We admire nothing but riches; we give ourselves up to sloth and effeminacy; we make no distinction between the good and the bad; whilst ambition engrosses all the rewards of virtue. Do you wonder, then, that dangerous conspiracies should be formed? (49)

Cato's literary action in this speech is a complex integration of performance and ethical philosophy. His lean phrasing--often in short independent clauses--is a principled substitute for the degenerate rhetoric of Rome, in both political and linguistic senses. Cato reinforces this double-edged assault in a third way by drawing attention to his own stoical deeds: “As I never spared any fault in myself, I was not easily inclined to favor the criminal excesses of others” (49). Cato's personal integrity, his direct syntax and his critique of self-interest are a multifaceted illustration of those virtues that his culture has forsaken. Like Socrates, whose Apology also appears in the Orator, Cato's active virtue,

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<sup>46</sup>

On American distrust of fraudulent language, see Gustafson's study of Thucydides's stasis at Corcyra and its legacy through Roman and American literature, especially (69-98; 348-71). Emerson's personal appropriation of this passage is evident in Nature when he laments the political consequences of corrupt language and “rotten diction” in the section on “Language.”

a mode of principled belief, direct speech, and conduct, is simultaneously an ethical, literary, and political intervention.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast to the active challenge of Cato's message, the model of virtue Noah Webster presents in his American Selection emphasizes obedience. Webster's excerpt from Act I of Addison's Cato features the dialogue between Juba and Syphax where Roman virtue is contrasted against Numidian (or African) virtue. Webster's selection has some culturally sensitive aspects. The "glowing dames of Zama's royal court" are handsomely contrasted with the "pale, unripen'd beauties of the north" and the strength and the intelligence of the Numidian officers compare favorably with that of the Roman officers. These characteristics, however, are explicitly degraded in Juba's often quoted response

These are all virtues of a meaner rank,  
Perfections that are placed in the bones and nerves;  
A Roman soul is bent on higher views:  
To civilize the rude unpolish'd world;  
To lay it under the restraint of laws;  
To make man mild, and sociable to man;  
To cultivate the wild licentious savage;  
With wisdom, discipline and liberal arts;  
The establishments of life: Virtues like these  
Make human nature shine, reform the soul,  
And break our fierce barbarians into men. (198)

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Frederick Douglass's awareness of the illocutionary power of Cato's speech is evident in his tributes to John Brown in December of 1860. After the Tremont street riot of December 3rd, where Douglass had to fight his way from the stage, he concluded his "Self-Made Men" speech on December 9th by using Cato's phrases to defend John Brown's life and his own freedom to speak about it (Holland 282). Elsewhere, Douglass adopted Cato's objection, "there must be no calling things by their right names" to critique the euphemisms of the Slave Power (1/14/62; FDP 3:477).

Webster's misrepresentation of Cato's "mild and sociable" behavior underscores the different types of patriotism Webster and Bingham sought to foster. In this passage, as in others on "Modesty," "Discretion," and "Pride," (usually taken from the Tatler and the Spectator), Webster's Selection attempts to enforce the mannered postures of Augustan gentility, well suited to the temper of the mid-nineteenth century and comfortable with the spectacle of revolt only at a distance.

The two anthologists' divergent politics are especially evident in their presentation of George Washington's speeches. The act of virile resignation was one of the most powerful codes of conduct operative on American leaders after the revolution. The ability to step down from office was what separated republican leaders from monarchical ones (Wood, Radicalism 197-210). As Garry Wills has shown, of all Americans, George Washington "perfected the art of getting power by giving it away." The decisions of Washington's career deliberately recalled images of the Roman general Cincinnatus, who, after being summoned from the plow to defend Rome, gratefully returned to the fields when his services were no longer needed (Cincinnatus 3). Washington's example proved to Americans that the spirit of revolution could be contained. Webster, responsive to the classical allegory, places Washington's resignation between Thomas Dawes's remarks on America's "agrarian law" and the fable of Saint Pierre's patriotic "self-sacrifice" in Calais (62-4). Washington's speech neatly bridges the two selections by first affirming that men's proper employment is agricultural and then by recommending his officers (rather than himself) to the patronage of Congress. Webster presents Washington's behavior as a

model of restrained conduct that students should imitate<sup>48</sup>

Whereas Webster offers a figure for reverence, a leader who gave power away, Bingham establishes a figure who is willing to act despite his deficiencies, and he even associates Washington with the active spirit of the French Revolution. Bingham begins the Orator with Washington's address to Congress in 1789 at the commencement of his presidency--the speech of a man embarking on a new career. Bingham also includes Washington's acceptance of the French flag from ambassador Adet just after Jay's Treaty, an act which Washington feared would be viewed unfavorably by his pro-English peers. As it turned out, Washington's acceptance of the flag, if only to deposit it in the government archives, infuriated Federalists like Webster (Deconde 424-37). Webster made Washington's patriotism a museum-piece, for Bingham, it was a lesson in activism.

As Washington's commencement address to Congress demonstrates, Bingham's virtuous heroes often look to the future. Ernst Bloch has described the character of Jeffersonian virtue as a utopian one, an "activity of expectation, of hopeful presentiment" rooted in "energy and surplus" (114). One of the selections in The Columbian Orator that best illustrates the political subversiveness of this energy is Arthur O'Connor's 1795 speech on behalf of Catholic emancipation in the Irish House of Commons. Like Cato, O'Connor's polemic unites word and deed--after his speech, he gives up his seat and joins the United Irishman. O'Connor also justifies his actions on clearly utopian hope. He

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Webster's second edition (1787 Philadelphia) presented a more active Washington. Some of the best passages of that reader were Washington's actual letters describing the battles of Monmouth and Trenton. Webster dropped the entire section after only one edition had been printed.

announces that he will “risk everything dear to me on earth” for the “Immutable principles” of free speech and trade, but at the same time he admits that these principles will not be fully manifest until after his sacrifice (243-246). The utopian energy and surplus of O’Connor’s literary action, despite its liberal credo, encourages surprisingly disruptive and radical political behavior from students

Other political selections from the Orator underscore Bingham’s activist message. Toward the beginning of the text, Bingham excerpts the conclusion of Thomas Muir’s trial for treason in Scotland. Included in the charges against Muir was the assertion that he had lent out a copy of Thomas Paine’s works. Muir responded that his only crime was that he had devoted himself to the cause of the people.

As for me, I am careless and indifferent to my fate. I can look danger, and I can look death in the face; for I am shielded by the consciousness of my own rectitude. I may be condemned to languish in the recesses of a dungeon. I may be doomed to ascend the scaffold. Nothing can deprive me of the recollection of the past, nothing can destroy my peace of mind, arising from the remembrance of having discharged my duty. (44)

As a school text, Bingham’s Orator openly encouraged his students to conscientious and active dissent.

### **Dartmouth and the Rights of Men**

In addition to its illustrations of declarative speech and polemic, The Columbian Orator features dramatic dialogues to highlight the efficacious powers of language. The great novelty of Bingham’s anthology was that most of its dialogues were custom written or “original.” Bingham’s fondness for educational dialogues derived from his college experience at Dartmouth and his study of the French historian, Charles Rollin. Because of

his family's friendship with Eleazar Wheelock in Connecticut. in 1779 Bingham went to Wheelock's recently-founded Dartmouth rather than Yale<sup>49</sup> Although records of the college syllabus are virtually nonexistent until 1796, the earliest library records extant in the Dartmouth archives. 1788, show students taking out such texts as Sheridan on reading, Pope's *Iliad*, Rollin's *Belle-Lettres* and ancient histories, Ward's *System of Oratory*, Priestley on oratory, Blair's *Lectures*, Kames's *Elements*, and Enfield's *Speaker* History and rhetoric were central components of a Dartmouth education at the time, and Rollin was very popular in both fields

Bingham's reference to Rollin in the epigraph to *The Columbian Orator* is significant for two reasons. First, Rollin was a fashionable author in America both before and after the war (Lundberg 267). Like Sallust, Rollin associated periods of decline in ancient history with the corrupting influences of luxury, and blamed the inequitable divisions of property derived from primogeniture as a fundamental cause of social decay (Fliegelman, *Pilgrims* 42-4). Americans probably found Rollin's history an appealing

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Dartmouth College was initially founded as a byproduct of Wheelock's project to educate Native Americans and return them to their tribes as missionaries. Wheelock created the Moor's Indian Charity School in Connecticut during the 1740s-50s and he moved it to New Hampshire in 1770 where he also founded Dartmouth. By 1779 about 150 Native Americans had been educated at Moor's school, though apparently many of these dropped out prematurely because Wheelock beat them (McCallum 288, 298). Wheelock collected funds in England by claiming Dartmouth would be a means of higher education for Indians, but his simultaneous solicitation from the New Hampshire legislature for a white college suggests his awareness that the project had not been very successful. See McCallum, Axtell, and Szasz for Wheelock's failure. Bingham was a close friend of Wheelock's and directed Moor's school for one year after his graduation, but Bingham apparently did not condone Wheelock's methods of physical discipline (Fowle 344).

critique of the courtly patronage they hoped to escape. Second, Rollin's educational theory stressed example rather than precept, a classical adage revived during the seventeenth and eighteenth century by associational psychology (which proposed that concrete examples or images impressed the mind more effectively than abstract theory). In particular, Rollin's dislike of rhetorical doctrine helps explain the relative lack of theory in Bingham's texts:

rhetoric without the study of good authors is lifeless and barren, and that examples in this, as in all other things, are infinitely more efficacious than precepts. And indeed, the rhetorician seems only to point out the path at a distance which youth are to follow; whilst the orator takes them by the hand and leads them to it. (Rollin 2.2 emphasis mine)

Rollin believed that students learned by doing. He wrote that students' engagement in dialogue and conversation was a more effective educational technique than the lecture system because it made education "a diversion" rather than a chore (4:282).

Bingham's advocacy of educational dialogues was also inspired by the productions of his college professor, John Smith. The year Bingham came to Dartmouth, Smith wrote and produced at least one drama for the college's entertainment, "A Dialogue Between an Englishman and an Indian" (Moody 7).<sup>50</sup> In it, the Indian, played by a "real Aboriginal" of Wheelock's school, refutes the arguments of a bad-tempered Englishman who believes that the Indians should be wiped out. The Indian admits his race is "unpolished" but replies that if all such peoples were exterminated, the Englishman's ancestors would have been, too (8). Through his "fluent" advocacy of "generous

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See Moody for transcriptions of Smith's Dartmouth plays. See Rugg for photographic facsimiles of the plays and a brief background commentary.

benevolence” the Indian persuades the Englishman to question his prejudice. Such educational dramas were encouraged at Dartmouth over the following years (7).

Although The Columbian Orator’s dialogues abound with conduct-book warnings against drinking and dueling, they are dynamic improvements on the narrative moralism of The Spectator. Many of these dialogues were written for the Orator by David Everett, who attended Dartmouth in the early 1790s when the college literary societies staged patriotic dramas and dialogues such as “The Demolition of Ancient Mexico,” poetic exercises celebrating the virtues of Columbia, and forensic debates on social issues (Dartmouth archives, United Fraternity Records, 1786-1800).<sup>51</sup> In contrast to Yale, where students disputed technical questions such as “which is the most just and equitable mode of taxation for paying the Continental debt” or “whether the repeal of the legal tender act be unjust,” the debates at Dartmouth were on more generally philosophical and frontier-oriented issues: “should commerce be free from restraint”; “how to establish a uniform system of education”; “should the Indians have exclusive right to all the lands they possess as hunting grounds” (Thomas 186).<sup>52</sup> Records of the United Fraternity during

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Everett attended Dartmouth when its literary societies were under attack for elitism. In 1793, radical egalitarian students destroyed the records of the Social Friends and formed an open “Independent” or “Pot Meal” society which lasted for some years (Tilton 164-165). Everett remained a republican for life. See Everett’s orientalized version of Addison’s Cato: Daranzel, or the Persian Patriot (1800) and his essay on the Chesapeake affair in 1807. Everett also started several republican newspapers, including the Boston Patriot in 1809 (Blake 3).

<sup>52</sup>

The difference between the forensic topics at Yale and Dartmouth forecasts a shift in the character of nineteenth-century legal discourse. According to Clarke and Halloran, the authority of “public consensus” slowly gave way to the authority of the specialized professions and the individual expert (1-4; see also Ferguson’s Law and Letters). Still on

Everett's tenure indicate a bias toward public-spirited conclusions. In December 1793, the Fraternity asked "do all men by nature have equal endowments?" Yes, the Fraters decided. In January 1794, "would the occupation of Canada be advantageous to America?" No. In May, "which is preferable, a public or a private education?" The Dartmouth students decided for a public one.

The spirit of the Dartmouth college debates is directly manifested in the dialogues Everett wrote, such as in his "Forensic Dispute on the Question, Are the Anglo-Americans Endowed with Capacity and Genius Equal to Europeans?", which begins and concludes in the affirmative. Everett's "Oppressive Landlord" is a biting critique of economic exploitation; the landlord, Don Philip, claims his liberal right to pursue his "own interest," rather than that of the community at large. Philip looks forward exploiting a "town crowded with foreigners who are exiled from their own homes" to pay "whatever price is demanded from them" (89). His property burns at the end, and only his lawyer remains to console him. Everett's dialogue on "Physiognomy" takes issue with Lavater's theory that men can be known by their looks. Lavater's precocious disciple is eventually robbed by a handsome flatterer (79). The Columbian Orator's criticisms of racial prejudice and economic self-interest are eloquent testament to powerful egalitarian ideologies in early American culture.

Whereas most early American readers portray Native Americans as "brave, strong, cruel, eloquent, and finally unfit for civilization" (Elson 70), The Columbian Orator is one

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the frontier, students at Dartmouth had not yet begun to absorb American culture's emerging preoccupation with the technical definitions of justice already finding expression at Yale.

of the few schoolbooks that defends Native Americans' tribal dignity and land rights<sup>53</sup> In the "Dialogue Between a White Inhabitant of the United States and an Indian," apparently modeled on Professor Smith's earlier dialogue, the Indian cleverly refutes the notion that whites had more right to Indian land because they cultivated it better:

White Man: [ ] If any have a superior claim, it must be those, who, by their arts and industry, can support the greatest number on the smallest territory

Indian: [....] What would your people say, if poor men should go to a rich man, and tell him, the Great Parent has given the earth to all men in common, we have not land enough; you have more than you need, [ ]. your great farm supports but few; you may move to one corner of your land; that is sufficient for you; we will take the rest. [ ...] Should you call this just? (270).

The Indian points out that claims of manifest destiny could be used by poor whites against rich landholders with unsettling consequences. He then asks, "The justice among White Men and Red Men must be different will you show me the difference?" The white settler, trying to put the Indian on the defensive by referring to Indian attacks on women and children, bluntly insists "we are governed by laws that protect our property and punish the disturbers of the peace." The Indian parries with an indictment of the unethical legalism of the settler:

I know you have many laws on paper, and some that ought to make the paper blush. We have but few; they are founded in justice, and written on the heart. They teach us to treat a stranger as our friend; to open our doors and spread our tables for the needy. If a white man come among us, our heart is in our hand; all we have is his; yet you call us savages! But

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Christianized Indians fared better in early readers. In the 1799 Columbian Reading Book, a white man asks, "Whose Indian are you?" The Indian replies, "I'm God Almighty's Indian. Whose Indian are you?" (Johnson, Old Time 282). None of the Indians in Bingham's Orator is Christian and they are proud of it.

that must mean something better than civilized, if you are civilized. (270)

The inversion of the terms savage and civilized, clearly borrowing from the strategy of Logan's speech and many other eighteenth-century representations of Native oratory, is unusual because Bingham's portrayals of Native Americans are not tinged with a sense of doom. As in Bingham's representations of Asians, blacks, and poor whites, The Columbian Orator consistently attacks the notion that such people are any less human than their wealthy Christian antagonists.

Although the Orator's anti-slavery passages are well known, several scholars have dismissed them as merely supportive of an ideology of bourgeois individualism.<sup>54</sup> Thad Ziolkowski has argued that the "Dialogue Between a Master and Slave," which Frederick Douglass recommends in his autobiographies, illustrates the slave's escape from physical bondage to the more subtle confines of bourgeois Enlightenment ideology (162-3).<sup>55</sup> The dialogue, however, is explicitly critical of bourgeois values. The confusion rests in the difference between humanitarian rights and economic ones. Although the passage suggests an instrumental view of literacy in the slave's expression of his individual rights (his literacy featured as a personal tool of a private, unencumbered individual), it also

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This interpretation of The Columbian Orator, largely derived from Peter F. Walker's portrait of Douglass preaching the "gospel of wealth" through his literacy (216-17), has been influential in much Douglass scholarship since 1980.

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For an alternative view of Douglass, literacy, and the Orator, see Royer. The dialogue is one of the few pieces Bingham took from another anthology, originally published by John Aiken and Anna Barbauld in their Evenings at Home. See Kramnick, "Children's Literature" for more on Barbauld and a discussion of English children's books as vehicles of capitalist indoctrination.

points out the limitations of a strictly rights-based world view--the slave indicts the wealth of the planter as evidence of his robbery of his peers (241). The shift in the argument from a focus on the slave's liberal human rights to the limitations of the master's liberal economic rights is an important example of the way the Orator's communitarian emphasis on human benevolence complicates its endorsements of middle class liberal values and republican citizenship. The Columbian Orator fosters a strong form of individualism, but it circumscribes individual rights within primary networks of collective and spiritual duty.

Despite the universal egalitarianism of the Orator, its descriptions of the role of women are problematic. There are no female orators in The Columbian Orator. They make astute comments in the dialogues, and they are the deserved recipients of an encomium on American industry in the "Eulogy on Franklin," but in The Columbian Orator their power is to resign, not to defy. In one dialogue, a preceptor warns a parent from getting his daughter educated in oratory:

But what can be more disgusting than to see innocent and timid females, whose excellence, in part, consists in their modesty, and silence before superiors, encouraged to reverse the order of nature, by playing the public orator on stage. And what often enhances our disgust, and sickens all our feelings, is, that their lips are taught to pronounce sentiments, extracted from the very dregs of European drama. (193)

But in an ambiguous conclusion to the preceptor's tirade, the parent leaves, withholding his daughter from the instruction of the preceptor.

Bingham, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, who grew up reading his text, had mixed feelings about women's oratory. In both his anthologies, Bingham advises women to pursue "useful knowledge," which, as Linda Kerber has argued, was a progressive stance

for the time (“Daughters” 40-1) Bingham started the first women’s academy in Boston, and he believed in giving boys and girls the same literary and practical education.<sup>56</sup> His first anthology contains a speech given by a female graduate of his school. Further, the general sentiments of The Columbian Orator would surely encourage a would-be Anne Hutchinson to voice her conscience. Unfortunately, the preceptor’s hysterical tirade against women’s public speech undermines the progressive social work Bingham attempted to accomplish.

### **Sublime Dissent**

Although The Columbian Orator subsumes the toleration of religious practice within a larger framework of American political freedoms, its political rhetoric is clearly founded on spiritual grounds. This union of religious enthusiasm with political ideology is what made the Orator so attractive to Americans at the time and what eventually guaranteed its obsolescence. Writing sixty years after Bingham’s death, Charles Cummings, assessing the history of education in Boston, found the Orator a “dismal” text precisely for its outdated politics and theology:

It was a gloomy and forbidding compilation. Of eighty pieces here brought together, four were on the Day of Judgement; thirteen were fragments of speeches in Parliament, on topics which had for the most part long lost their interest for American readers [...] To all this dismal entertainment the only relief was a scene from a farce of Garrick, and a bit from Miss Burney’s Camilla turned into a dialogue. Nothing illustrates more forcibly the forlorn condition of mind in which our forefathers walked through this

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Szasz notes that Bingham’s mentor, Eleazar Wheelock, was unusual in his belief that Indian women should be educated just as men. Wheelock was motivated, however, by the hope that once back with their tribes, the women would spread their education like a Christian virus.

vale of tears than such a collection of their schoolpieces [note:] A venerable lady has told me with a remembrance half amused, half painful, of having [...] been called by her grandmother, on the occasion of the minister's visit to the house, to stand up and read to him from the Columbian Orator the fragment beginning "Let us endeavor to realize the majesty and terror of the universal alarm on the final judgement day, etc." From the Columbian Orator [...] to the American First-Class Book [...] is but a few years in time; but what an advance in breadth and capacity of understanding! (644)

There was no shortage of tears, piety, and heroism in the book Cummings praised, but its sentiments were controlled and stylized in reaction to the enthusiasms of the Romantic period. Cummings's conservative fear of evangelical theology was a reflection of changing theories about childhood education, as well as an attempt to suppress radical elements of American history.<sup>57</sup>

The New Light millennialism of The Columbian Orator forms a crucial part of its oratorical ethos. Affirming the agency of speech to inaugurate the millennium, postmillennial doctrine held that human activity would commence the visible appearance of Christ.<sup>58</sup> The social reform activities of the first half of the nineteenth century were largely accomplished under the sign of postmillennial expectation, and it is likely that the

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By the 1850's, Pestalozzi's beliefs concerning child education (ie: children should learn through their physical senses and their immediate environment), once a refreshing alternative to the drudgery of rote exercise, helped to tame the content of American schoolbooks (Noble 222-237). Exoticism and quirky historical vignettes gave way to sentimental lessons concerning policemen, firemen, and death.

<sup>58</sup>

James Moorhead's 1984 essay "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880," is a well footnoted introduction to postmillennialist scholarship. Other frequently cited studies include Smith (1965), Tuveson (1968), Maclear (1971), J. Davidson (1977) and Moorhead (1978). A persuasive study of the influence of postmillennial thought on Frederick Douglass is David Blight's Frederick Douglass's Civil War.

activist eschatology of the Orator kept it a popular text in that context. The enthusiasm for “the earth heaving, charnel-houses rattling, tombs bursting, graves opening, [and] the air darkening with fragments of bodies” is what Cummings found so alarming (Orator 99). The millennial violence featured in The Columbian Orator, however, glorifies the revolutionary origins of the nation as a favorable omen for the future. Passages by Timothy Dwight and David Everett make it clear that the “awful forms” arising from the “blaze” of “nitrous grain” are American patriots, on whom God has passed favorable judgement (169, 217). By describing America as the New Jerusalem, The Columbian Orator integrates its speakers with both present and future community in the nearly antinomian doctrine

Why on himself should man void judgement pass?  
Is idle nature laughing at her sons?  
Who conscience sent, her sentence will support,  
And God above assert that God in man. (218)

The connection of the “sentence” of American nature with human speech makes American reformers, their faith, and American nature resonate together in a vocal and active community

The New Light millennialism of the Orator also celebrates the sublime beauty of God’s creation. Bingham includes several selections from the Calvinist devotional writer, James Hervey, whose Meditations and Devotions (1745-7) were enormously popular in England and America after mid-century. Bingham features Hervey’s “On a Starry Night,” a well-known example of the Calvinist sublime, awestruck at the beauty of nature. While Hervey is remembered today as a writer of overstuffed banalities, his Calvinism was

radical. In 1755, he published the controversial Dialogues Between Theron and Aspacio, where Aspacio tries to convince Theron of the doctrine of imputed righteousness, which held that through Christ's sacrifice all men might plead for redemption before the Lord.<sup>59</sup> While this doctrine of mortal "righteousness" was solely to assure evangelical Calvinists of redemption, it promoted social activism--men would be forgiven for their deeds on earth. The tract was reprinted many times in America at the behest of the New Divinity theologian, Joseph Bellamy. In Hervey's work, we see how the sublime beauty of Calvinist "nature" affirms a spiritual relationship to politics.

The Columbian Orator is filled with outsiders whose severe virtue is contingent on the integrity of their dissent. Religious dissent had specific meaning for colonial Americans, but its meaning was gradually secularized in the struggles for political independence. The British political economist, Josiah Tucker, exaggerated the connection between the American revolution and American religious practice, but he correctly identified the spirit behind Bingham's secular and religious orators:

I mean [these] modern new-light men, who protest against everything, and who would dissent even from themselves [...] if no other Means of Dissention could be found out. [...] Such Protestants as these are very literally PROTESTERS; but it is hard to say, what they are besides [...] [T]he Religion most prevalent in the Northern Colonies is a Refinement on

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See Kearney for a study of Hervey. In Theron and Aspacio, Aspacio glosses the doctrine of imputed righteousness as follows: "By Christ's righteousness, I understand the whole of his passive and active obedience; springing from the perfect holiness of his heart, continued through the whole progress of his life, and extending to the very last pang of his death--by the word imputed, I would signify, that this righteousness, though performed by the Lord, is placed on our account; it is reckoned and adjudged by God as our own. Insomuch, that we may plead it, and rely on it, for the pardon of our sins, for acceptance into his family, and for the enjoyment of life eternal" (20).

the principles of Resistance: the Dissidence of Dissent, and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion (qtd in Pocock, Virtue 164)

The Columbian Orator paradoxically harnessed the voice of protest to forge tighter bonds of affiliation. Bingham exposed hundreds of thousands of Americans to an idea of community constituted by dissent, where the orator was a symbol of present and future millennium. The radicalism of the Orator was not only in its advocacy of disruptive rhetoric, but in its telos. Spiritual, communal and often anti-materialistic, the Orator proposed an American future far different from the bourgeois secular millennialism which influenced so many aspects of nineteenth-century culture.<sup>60</sup>

### **Jeffersonian Republicanism**

The Orator's promotion of active virtue over quiet self-interest presented an unusually idealistic, and perhaps anachronistic, lesson for young Americans. In the 1790s the development of American commerce was a national necessity and in many ways financial self-interest was advantageous to the public interest. Jack Greene has argued that the American Revolution was fought less for "the passion for pursuing the public good" than for the "pursuit of happiness" within the sanctum of a private life, uncorrupted by public intrusions (230-1). Greene's argument persuasively describes the attitude of

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Sacvan Bercovitch's Rites of Assent is an important discussion of the ritual of dissent as a characteristic value of American culture. The Columbian Orator can be read in some ways as strong evidence of Bercovitch's hypothesis. But in stripping dissent of its specific political and social objects, and in assuming a hegemony of economic liberalism that is always emergent and finally dominant, Bercovitch's premise is that history is over and it has resulted in a liberal millennium. Although the Orator champions righteous dissent, it accents a communitarian notion of duty whose significance is lost in Bercovitch's broad vision of liberalism.

many southern colonists, but he speculates that even after the Revolution, the demand for virtuous conduct was strongly colored by private interest (233). Lance Banning affirms Greene's point, writing, "only a minority of the Revolutionaries ever hoped for superhuman [ ] disinterested participation in political affairs," but significantly, he excludes certain "enthusiastic Christians" in New England (206). It is an important exception.

The Columbian Orator was written during the height of antagonism between the Federalist and Republican parties, just after the French Revolution. Republican ideals of political equality and popular participation were in violent opposition to the exclusionary and mannered elitism of the Federalist party (Appleby 79). The vehemence of the speakers in Bingham's Orator clearly sanctioned, and popularized for many years after, the unruliness and enlightened rationalism of the small republican societies which arose during the mid-1790s in imitation of the French Jacobin clubs. As Joyce Appleby has written, these egalitarian political groups manifested "a collective hope" for a better future based, in part, on active political participation (86)<sup>61</sup>. Although it is unknown whether Bingham was a member of radical clubs like the Massachusetts Constitutional Society or the Boston Jacobin Clubb, Bingham's bookstore was a central meeting place for the beleaguered democratic-republicans of Federalist Boston (Fowle 440). Bingham's publications reflected his commitment to debate and social action, but more importantly, they preserved the active republican spirit of the mid-1790s and codified it as a literary practice

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For more on the revolutionary enlightenment see May (153-307). For studies of the democratic-republican clubs in Massachusetts, see Goodman, Young, and Link.

for generations of students long after the Jeffersonian Republicans lost influence

### Chapter 3

#### An Apology for Eloquence:

#### Emerson's "Circles" and the Log Cabin Campaign

Toward the end of an essay published in the early 1970s, Harold Bloom identifies Emerson's appreciation for oratory as the single reason why he has been so difficult to capture with the apparatus of deconstruction.

And I think Nietzsche particularly understood that Emerson had come to prophesy not a de-centering, as Nietzsche had, and as Derrida and De Man are brilliantly accomplishing, but a peculiarly American re-centering, [...] a mode that is intra-textual, but that stubbornly remains logocentric, and that still follows Emerson in valorizing eloquence, the inspired voice, over, the scene of writing. (147-8)

Bloom's recommendation of the stubbornly "logocentric" quality of Emerson's work goes against the grain of many recent interpretations of his lectures and writing. Rather than treating language as a corruption, or a "fall" from grace, Emerson celebrates the immanence of spoken word, the power of speech to renovate the meaning of the present. As Bloom points out, Emerson's literary style is both intratextual and logocentric. For Emerson, and many of his nineteenth-century peers, this philosophy of language was closely connected to oratory, a genre able to convey insight and the process of coming-to-insight at the same time.

Learning to unpack the nineteenth-century's assumptions about the spoken word offers one of the most important new avenues to re-assessing the literature of the period, particularly its portrayals of individuality. Because oratory is a public art form, its interpretation requires a recognition of the presence of both speaker and audience.

Although theories of the death of the author, the arbitrariness of the sign, and the critique of "presence," have contributed greatly to the analysis of oral genres, they have difficulty describing the social mechanics of performance where speaker and audience fuse. Nineteenth-century oratory glorified the heroic individual, but it did so in a celebration of collective spirit. Contemporary literary criticism tends to find heroic oratory rather flat, ostentatious, and politically regressive. Nineteenth-century audiences heard something far different, however, a sense of collective individuality which was spiritual, utopian, and politically active.

Emerson, in particular, had enormous enthusiasm for heroic oratory in his youth. Edward Everett, Daniel Webster, and Edward T. Taylor appear with regularity in Emerson's letters and journals. In one instance Emerson even lists a catalogue of important Everett and Webster speeches which he presumably studied (JMN 3:38)<sup>62</sup>. Scholars from Matthiessen to Packer have often noted this influence, usually quoting from Emerson's journal entry:

I derive from [my father] or his patriot parent a passionate love for the strains of eloquence [...] I have hoped to put on eloquence as a robe, and by goodness and zeal and the awfulness of virtue, to press and prevail over false arguments, the rebel passions and corrupt habits of men. (JMN 2:239)

Late in life, however, Emerson was embarrassed by his youthful ecstasies over purple-patched oratory, and his mature repudiation of its power over him seems to have

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I use the following abbreviations for the major Emerson collections: L Letters; LC Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle; W Complete Works, Centenary Ed. 1904; EL Early Lectures; JMN Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks; S Complete Sermons; LOA Library of America (Ed. Joel Porte). All quotations from these sources are in clear text, insertions included; I have not included manuscript cancellations.

been largely accepted today (JMN 11:266). On this issue Barbara Packer represents a broad consensus of Emerson scholarship when she writes, “gradually in the journals and sermons one can witness the dawning of a livelier style as Emerson begins to abandon the ‘stock qualities of college rhetoric’ for the pungencies of the great seventeenth-century prose masters whose works he began to study and try to imitate” (3).<sup>63</sup> Although Emerson’s style changed greatly during the 1820s and 30s, I argue that Emerson’s mature writing grows not simply as a rejection of the oratorical rhetoric he studied in college, but as a highly sophisticated assimilation and redeployment of those rhetorical ideals.

For Emerson, oratory manifested the active and transformative potential of language. Anticipating Heidegger’s thoughts in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” and drawing on lessons he took from Everett, Webster, and Taylor, Emerson thought of literature as the mutual creation of a world among speaker and audience. The sense of dialectic revelation generated during public eloquence is a constant theme of his essays and addresses, and this had a highly political valence as well. Recent work by Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson has reminded us of Emerson’s strong abolition stance long before his criticism of Webster in 1850. Even during Emerson’s disillusionment with the political sphere during the late 1830s and early 1840s, his writing and lectures absorbed and transformed the very political discourses he claimed to abjure. Re-reading Emerson’s

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See also Buell (143), Barish (254), Brittin, and Roberts. Packer’s assertion is a bit misleading. Although Emerson greatly appreciated writers like Donne, Jonson, Bacon and Browne (see his “Lectures on English Literature” (EL 1:205-371), he appreciated them for their earthiness. By the mid-1830s Emerson began to gravitate more to the language of the street and confessed he found such great English writers “tedious” despite the depth of their genius (JMN 5:201).

essay "Circles" through a recovery of some of the orators, controversies, and aesthetic theories that influenced Emerson's sense of style allows us to see how Emerson's writing was deeply energized by oratorical debates of his day.

### **The Legacy of Everett, Webster and Taylor**

Part of the reason why modern criticism has slighted the influence of oratory on nineteenth-century letters is a confusion over the nature of "classical oratory" and "rhetoric." Our contemporary bias is to associate classical oratory with pomp and ostentation, but even audiences of Emerson's day disliked "empty declamation and dishonest artifice" (Channing 26). Rather, the theories of rhetoric taught at Harvard during Emerson's education stressed an integration of language and occasion whose principles are still used in writing manuals today.<sup>64</sup> In particular, the major authority of early nineteenth-century rhetoric, Hugh Blair, repeatedly stressed that the style of declamation should "follow nature." While this ambiguous advice often served to mask the critical ideology of the Augustan age (basically, Hamlet's advice to the players not to tear a passion to tatters), it also promoted the contemporary philosophy that students modify their discourse according to their own talents, rhetorical situation, and audience.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See Berlin, "Contemporary"; and Connors.

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Eighteenth-century rhetoricians' agreement on "natural" speaking does not do full justice to the differences among rhetorical authorities of the period but the differences between Blair's emphasis in simplicity and clarity, Campbell's on "vivacity," and Whately's emphasis on techniques of argumentation, do not weaken the assertion that they all agreed on the desirability of a natural style. See Guthrie, and Golden and Corbett for a comparative survey of the main figures. Unfortunately, Blair's simple advice was accompanied by several hundred pages of technical suggestions about how to achieve a natural style. See Liebman and Baumgartner for contrasting appraisals of the influence of

An emphasis on naturalness and lack of affectation was shared by early English elocutionists such as Thomas Sheridan and John Mason, by American schoolbook redactors such as Noah Webster and Caleb Bingham, and by the new Harvard College Boylston Professor of Rhetoric, Edward T. Channing.<sup>66</sup> All agreed that the moment a speaker's performance seems contrived, it fails.

An awareness of the integration of a speaker's performance--of character, word, gesture and occasion--helps explain the popularity of Edward Everett, a speaker generally indicted today for unpardonable classicism (Wills, Lincoln)<sup>67</sup> Emerson worshiped Everett's style in college, copying in both his journals and letters such Everett passages as "Man standing on the confines of that other world where Goodness & Happiness those stranger sisters shall meet together & know each other, & seeing creation on creation sweeping by to their doom, then he shall learn to pity little Man piling up his monuments of marble and calling it fame" (JMN 1:6). Emerson bragged he could still recite half of this sermon the night after Everett gave it (L 90).

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Blair's theories on Emerson's early writing.

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Edward T. Channing, an important figure in Emerson's education, was particularly conscious of the dangers of micro-managing students rhetorical training and he encouraged students to develop their own style of discourse. Channing discusses the philosophy, rather than the techniques, of developing a unique style. For those nevertheless suspicious of the kind of social discipline Channing's oratorical theories promoted, it is good to keep in mind that Channing left much to his students' discretion. In contrast, Jonathan Barber, an elocutionist hired at Harvard from 1829-35, put students in bamboo cages to teach them the limits and proper quadrants of gesture and delivery (Anderson and Braden, intro. xli).

<sup>67</sup>

For an excellent overview of Everett's career and speaking style see Ronald F. Reid's study of Everett in Clark and Halloran's Oratorical Culture.

As recalled by Emerson in "Life and Letters in New England," Everett brought to Harvard in 1820 a spirit of creative historical insight which heartened students in a period of growing intellectual alienation and analytic detachment (W 10:336-30). In his 1840 lecture, "Analysis, the Spirit of the Age," Emerson discussed men who transcended the introverted, self-dissecting urge (of men "born with knives in their brain"), and promised a spiritual union with Universal Mind and Nature (EL 3:186-190). His memories of Everett strongly inflect these remarks.

Everett produced this effect with a learned harmony of subject and performance. In addition to Everett's ease with complicated tropes and rhetorical techniques, Emerson recalled Everett's skill at making the connection between the past and present seem "pregnant" with meaning. "Let [Everett] rise to speak on what occasion soever, [and] a fact had always just transpired which composed, with some other fact well known to the audience, the most pregnant and happy coincidence" (W 10:331). Everett's taste for illustrative juxtaposition often provides the central organizational principle of his most famous orations. Everett's "Plymouth Oration" is a brilliant example of the way he brings historical knowledge to bear on the present. Recalling the ancient orator's function as an archive of public memory, Everett spans three phases of ancient civilization in a few paragraphs, placing his listeners in the midst of historical change and dazzling them with his scope. To Emerson, reading the "Plymouth Oration" was like "staring at the sun," and he later claimed it was one of the few compositions he had read with unreserved approbation, comparing it to Socrates' Apology, and Milton's Comus and Areopagitica! (JMN 2:318, 6:194).

What could cause such infatuation? Everett embodied his subject. Everett argued the rising prospect of America was the “rebirth” of a modern creative consciousness (the Greeks being, in Everett’s view, the first moderns). To his students, Everett himself was proof that mantle of western civilization has passed to America. Unlike literature meant to be appreciated in private, Everett’s major orations of the 1820s had a self-reflexive quality when performed as public ceremony. His 1824 Phi Beta Kappa address in 1824, ostensibly a discussion of the “motives to intellectual exertion” in the United States, decorated his own literary achievement as much as it proclaimed the rising genius of his country. Everett’s ethos, the personal integrity behind his words, was essential to his success. As Edward Channing defined it, an orator’s “hearers must believe that his life is steadily influenced by the sentiments he is trying to impress on them--that he is willing to abide by principle at any hazard, and give his opinions and professions the full authority of his actions” (23). Or, as Emerson described the life of George Fox, “That which I am in words I am the same in life” (S 4.205). Everett’s personality was an integral part of making the “classicism” of his orations come alive.

Young Emerson’s enthusiasm for Everett and his exhilaration at the “flashing eye” and “living brow” of Exhibition Night, were rooted in Common Sense beliefs about taste, moral sentiment, religion, and rhetoric (JMN 1:38). Common Sense thought had become so thoroughly disseminated by the authors and teachers of Emerson’s day that it operated more like an ideological field than a set of debatable propositions (Charvat 35). Daniel Walker Howe has discussed the way Common Sense philosophy provided Unitarians with a rational machinery to understand the persuasive power of the spoken word; at the same

time. Common Sense philosophy invigorated the study of rhetoric and oratory as psychological sciences (Unitarian 191) <sup>68</sup> The Scottish philosophers believed that proper observation of human nature would reveal the true principles of rhetoric. This insight also suggested its converse: students of successful rhetoric could study the actual contours of the human mind. In reading Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric or Archibald Alison on Taste, Emerson imbibed the notion that the glories of eloquence emanated directly from corollary structures of the mind, and beyond that, from God. The production and appreciation of eloquence were not only crucial aspects of cultivating a literary sensibility--they were passageways to the most exalted and ineffable faculties of the human spirit <sup>69</sup>

Central to such rhetorical theory was the idea that different kinds of eloquence were unique to each speaker: not all speakers (or situations) suited Everett's gilded phraseology <sup>70</sup>. And as Emerson remarks in his journal, to speak the words of another is to

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See Golden and Corbett for a useful introduction to how the central rhetoricians of the eighteenth and nineteenth century synthesized classical oratory with modern science. Principles of associational psychology, advanced by writers such as Locke, Hume, David Hartley, Hutcheson, Reid, and Adam Smith, contributed greatly to developing a scientific approach to the study of rhetoric (8-14)

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Mary Cayton cites a passage from Blair which Emerson copied into his notebook, and which explains some of the reason why he would study Everett so carefully: "Speech is the great instrument by which man becomes beneficial to man; and it is to the intercourse and transmission of thought by means of speech, that we are chiefly indebted to the improvement of thought itself. What we call human reason is not the effort or ability of one, so much as it is the result of the reason of many arising from lights mutually communicated" (152).

<sup>70</sup>

See Cmeil for a helpful taxonomy of vulgar, plain, middling and grand styles in the nineteenth century. From these forms, Cmeil argues persuasively for a carnivalization of style during the nineteenth century, loosely based around the "middling" style derived from

wear "a dead feather in the cap cut off from all life" (JMN 3 212). Emerson's journal in early 1820 indicates that although he sought to emulate the effect Everett could produce, he imagines that his own discourse would have a plainer (though equally powerful) style. Emerson projects the effect an earnest young minister might have on his congregation, perhaps anticipating his own moments of grandeur:

let us suppose a pulpit Orator to whom the path of his profession is yet untried but whose talents are good & feelings strong & his independence as a man in opinion and action is established; let him ascend the pulpit floor the first time not to please or displease the multitude but to expound to them the words of the book & to waft their minds and devotions to heaven. Let him come to them in solemnity & strength & when he speaks he shall chain attention with an interesting figure & an interested face. To expand their views of the sublime doctrines of the religion he may embrace the universe & bring down the stars from their courses to do homage to their Creator. Here is a fountain which can not fail them. (JMN 1 7-8)

Emerson's vision of the youthful preacher is a remarkably accurate portrait of how he would conduct himself during his career as a minister (Wider). He developed a confident and yet self-effacing style, relatively free of pyrotechnics. He fashioned his sermons with autobiographical concern, evident both in his identification with Christ and his choice of topics throughout his ministry (Mott; Roberson). If a sermon's quality can be gauged by the degree of sincerity evident in its remarks, Emerson did his best to speak on topics with which he was currently struggling.

Although Emerson generally restrained from overly indulgent rhetorical display, as the above journal entry continues, the influence of Everett surfaces in his description of the effect the young preacher's eloquence would have on the congregation:

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Addison.

Then when life & its frivolities is fastly flowing away from before them & the spirit is absorbed in the play of its mightiest energies & their eyes are upon him & their hearts are in heaven then let him discharge his fearful duty. then let him unfold the stupendous designs of celestial wisdom. & whilst admiration is speechless let him minister to their unearthly wants and let the ambassador of the most high prove himself worthy of his tremendous vocation (JMN 1 7-8)

The contrast between the plain-but-earnest style of the young minister and the passionate description of his sublime efficacy captures the fantastic impression Everett made on Emerson. Although Emerson seldom took up the “sublime style” in public (in the sense of grandiloquence) many of his sermons show him experimenting with sensational modes of address

Suppose then an eloquence which I would to God were mine had moved the spirits of this congregation and had awakened their imaginations--let me rather say their understanding--to a discernment of the prodigious effect they were capable of producing; and that under this impression an hundred, fifty, or even ten, had sternly resolved to break away once and forever from the insidious seductions of sloth, of depraved customs, of open and secret vice and scorning the tame indolence which dallies away life in doing neither good nor evil should give themselves up to a manly, unfeigned, uncompromising ardor for virtue; should sever themselves with that omnipotent force which God confers on virtue alone from the deeds, the words and the appetites of vice, and, plighting their pure hands to heaven and each other, should lead lives void of offense before God and before man, what, let me ask you, would be too much, what would be enough, to expect from its full effect from the determination of this inviolable brotherhood? [...] They would infuse new blood, I borrow the language, they would infuse new blood into the veins of this world. (§ 1 75)

Emerson preached this heady piece thirteen times between 1827 and 1828. Based on the passage from Timothy, “But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Emerson declares that he ought to be the inspiration for a group of converts (disciples?) to usher in a new millennium through the righteous

preaching of the gospel (1412). Here, Emerson employs both the rhetorical style and the same notions of national redemption Everett embodied at Plymouth. Prefiguring his description of the "Genuine Man" in sermon 164, Emerson articulates a faith in speech from which he never departed. Even after the hostile reception to the Divinity School address, Emerson would console himself that he was one of a "handful" whose messages were destined to shake the world (JMN 7:126). By the late 1820s and early 1830s, however, Emerson's enthusiasm for Everett began to fail with the perception that Everett had begun lose his grip on the incarnate word by adopting derivative styles (JMN 4:257).

The figure who always provoked Emerson's oratorical imagination, however, and who aroused some of the most passionate oratory Emerson ever delivered, was Daniel Webster. It is to thoughts of Webster, the orator, that Emerson turns after he makes his famous declaration "In good writing words become one with things" (JMN 3:271).

Barbara Packer suggests that what Emerson means is a preference for Anglo-Saxon words over Latinate ones (4). It is true that both Emerson and Webster preferred the Saxon lexicon, and Emerson became notorious for his deliberately bathetic descents into the "pot and kettle" (Whipple xxiii; Bowen 371). But the unity of the word with the thing came not just from Saxon simplicity but from the theories of Common Sense rhetoric in which Emerson was immersed. As many of Emerson's journal entries make clear, the figure who best represented the integration of man, word, and belief was Webster, who "is always speaking to the thing itself" (JMN 3:298-99).

Among his contemporaries, Webster was known for his compact and forcible style, and for the clarity with which he presented complicated ideas. In his biographical essay on

Webster's style. Edwin Whipple attempts to capture Webster's preference for common language with anecdotes that sound uncannily like they might have been taken from Emerson's journal. Attempting to explain how logic and word unite in successful metaphor, Whipple recalls discussing the dangers of a recent hot spell with a Cape Ann farmer. The farmer replies that fortunately a wet spring had saturated the ground, and now "God has been putting his flat-iron over it, and 'twill all come out right in the end" a metaphor which unites the farmer, his observation of his wife's ironing, and the weather in one stroke.<sup>71</sup> Whipple points out Webster's genius for using such compact elemental metaphor, citing the first Bunker Hill address in which Webster declares that Spain "stooped on South America, like a vulture on its prey," and Webster's lapidary claim, "The principle of free institutions adheres to the American soil. It is bedded in it, immoveable as its mountains" (xvxi). Emerson copied the latter quotation into his notes, emblematic of his agreement that nature and men's beliefs formed an organic union (JMN 6:17). Although Webster is remembered today for spread-eagled rhetoric, his peers admired him for his economy and precision. Emerson, who confessed to Carlyle that he had given Webster perhaps "a hundred fine hours of study" throughout his life, clearly applauded Webster's use of natural imagery (LC 246).

For Emerson, the most important component of the Webster mystique was Webster's relationship to action. Unlike Everett, whose commemorative speeches associated him magnificent sensibility, Webster represented the bond between expression and deed, a speaker whose word was action (W 7:115). The term "action" itself has a

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<sup>71</sup> For a wide ranging study of the humble style of this quotation, see Cmeil 94-122.

special meaning in the lexicon of oratorical theory, however, where it refers to all the parts of delivery, inclusive of pronunciation and gesture.<sup>72</sup> The stress which the ancients placed on action also influenced the conception and arrangement of argument (inventio and dispositio), making it a difficult concept to teach.<sup>73</sup> Emerson was present when Webster famously defined what oratorical action was. Describing the eloquence of John Adams at the Adams-Jefferson memorial in 1826, Webster declared

True eloquence, indeed, does not consist in speech. It cannot be brought from far. Labor and learning can toil for it, but they will toil in vain. Words and phrases may be marshaled in every way, but they cannot compass it. It must exist in the man, in the subject, and in the occasion. Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation all may aspire to it; they cannot reach it. It comes, if it come at all, like the outbreking of a fountain from the earth, or the bursting forth of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force. The graces taught in the schools, the costly ornaments of speech, shock and disgust men, when their own lives and the fate of their wives, their children, and their country, hang on the decision of an hour. Then words have lost their power, rhetoric is vain, and all elaborate oratory contemptible. Even genius itself feels rebuked and subdued, as in the presence of higher qualities. Then patriotism is eloquent; then self-devotion is eloquent. The clear conception, outrunning the deductions of logic, the high purpose, the firm resolve, the dauntless spirit, speaking on the tongue, beaming from the eye, informing every feature, and urging the whole man onward, right onward

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A possibly apocryphal story about Demosthenes was told to all young orators of Webster's day in which Demosthenes was asked to list the three most important components of a successful speech. He replied, "action, action, action." Emerson's awareness of the rhetorical meaning of "action" is evident in his journal where he notes, "Legare translates [the Greek word for "action"] (Demosthenes's famous triple recipe)--"acting" not "action" (JMN 6:326). Apparently, Emerson had just read Hugh Swinton Legaré's "Demosthenes, the Man, the Statesman, and the Orator." The New York Review 9 (July 1841): 69.

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As I point out in my chapter on The Columbian Orator, the early English elocutionists John Mason and Thomas Sheridan were frustrated by the ambiguity with which the ancients used the term, and they consequently tried to restrict its meaning to gesture.

to his object.--this is eloquence: or rather it is something greater or higher than all eloquence.--it is action. noble. sublime. godlike action (167)

At the unexpected turn of phrase, "shock and disgust," Webster erupts with a sense of moral conviction that scatters schools of rhetoric with "volcanic fires." The turn of phrase is action, in a dramatic sense, but when Webster reached the climactic final words of this passage, he stamped his foot on the podium. The effect, says one observer, was electrifying (Curtis 1:275). Although Webster was ostensibly eulogizing Adams's eloquence, Emerson remarked afterward that it was Webster himself who "fully realized the boldest conception of eloquence" (JMN 3:29)<sup>74</sup>

Despite Emerson's admiration for Webster's oratory, it is generally thought that Webster represented one of the figures Emerson rejects in Nature. Harold Bloom's discussion of Emerson's anti-influence orations of 1837-1840 has promoted an "anxiety" paradigm which reads Emerson's art as an attempt to transcend and criticize the genre Webster dominated (Gustafson, Representative 352-378). As is well known, Emerson's use of Webster's phrase "sepulchres of the fathers" in the second sentence of Nature is evidence of his attempt to reform, if not reject, the sense of paternal respect which Webster memorialized in his first Bunker Hill speech.

But by asking for "an original relation to the universe," of "new lands, new words, new thoughts," to replace the retrospective posture of parent-worship, Emerson pays tribute to the very legacy which he appears to criticize. Emerson's call for new action is

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In fact, in his eulogy on Adams, Webster read a speech-within-a speech, supposedly given by Adams, but which Webster himself had penned for the occasion.

built on the myth of the radicalism of the earlier American generations. On one level, Emerson is proudly rejecting the antiquarian reverence for Washington and the Greeks.<sup>75</sup> However, Emerson is also saying, let us be more like those forebears were (JMN 5 292). Emerson's announcement of his departure from the "sepulchres of the fathers" is an invigoration and transformation of the agency for which they stood.

Emerson's complex debt to Webster is also evident in his employment of the term "action" in its technical sense. Rhetorically speaking, Emerson did not stamp his feet like Webster; he shuffled papers and smiled beatifically. He did not hurl thunderbolts; he gently hesitated to give the impression of finding the right word--even though it was written on the page--as if he were delicately placing a star at the top of a crystal sphere (Rohler 40-42). Emerson required his own style of action to intensify the sense of discovery and revelation he wished to give to his lectures. As Webster declares in his *Adams-Jefferson commemoration*, *eloquence and action are found in the synthesis of man and commitment, not in high-blown language and affected passion.*

Emerson generally speaks disparagingly of action, civic or otherwise. At best, it is a "secondary" concern of the scholar; at worst, a commitment to machine-like repetition (LOA 204). As Emerson writes in his essay, "Goethe," the real "measure of action is the sentiment from which it proceeds. The greatest action may easily be one of the most private circumstance" (LOA 749). Oddly enough, however, these statements reflect a complicated absorption of civic action. The roots of these statements are evident in

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As Cayton points out, Emerson apparently rejects the "age of commemoration" represented by Everett (55).

Emerson's early career, where he learned to combine his worship for Webster as an icon of radical civic activism with his obligations as a Unitarian minister

To Emerson's credit, he was not shy about criticizing slavery or the treatment of the Indians from his pulpit. In 1831 Emerson told his congregation during a Fast Day sermon, "our treatment of the Indian in one portion of the country, a barefaced trespass of power upon weakness, and the vindication of that wrong by the law of the Land and the general indifference with which this outrage passes before the eyes of the whole nation, is a most alarming symptom of how obtuse is the moral sense of the people" (§ 3:141). One year later, Emerson went even further, explaining that Fast day was not only for personal atonement but a "social and political commemoration." Emerson asserts that where it might be appropriate for citizens to acquiesce to bad government Europe, it is the duty of common citizens to share in the "acts of government" in the United States. Emerson winds up his argument with a climax reminiscent of the repetitive syntax of Webster's description of action.

Let every man then say to himself--the cause of the Indian, it is mine, the cause of the slave, it is mine; the cause of the union, it is mine, the cause of public honesty, of education, of religion, they are mine; and speak and act thereupon as a freeman and a Christian. (§ 4:115)

In this passage, Emerson clearly draws on the codes of Webster's simple righteousness.

At the same time, however, Emerson pulls back from total commitment to action. Mary Cayton and Wesley Mott have argued the position of the Unitarian church was to downplay defiant rhetoric and controversy. Just when Emerson verges on calling upon his congregation to take up public action, he equivocates:

But at the same time, let [the good Christian] be also careful, step by step with his censure of public vices, to censure and reform his own, in the conviction, as we have said, that the public wrongs are only private wrongs magnified. This will temper his condemnation of public evils, and at the same time prove their most effectual remedy (§ 4:115)

Emerson's strategy--like that of the Unitarian church at the time--is to absorb controversy rather than propagate it. In this passage Emerson vocalizes the need for both private and public duty. As he does in so many of his sermons, he adopts the language of active virtue, only to direct its manifestation away from the collective and toward the individual. In sermon 8, whose topic is to celebrate the progress of the "pure Millennium" Emerson chastises those who say "Lord, Lord, but [do] not the works of active virtue" (1:112 emphasis mine). Emerson looks forward to the "acceleration" of the millennium by "individual effort." At the end of sermon 14 he anticipates "the hour [ ] coming when [the millennium] shall multiply blessings to all the family of man, when it shall break the captive's chain, and visit the cottage of the wretched and forsaken" (1:154). But while describing how this millennium shall come about, Emerson hopes it shall never be confounded with "worldly interest" or the "frantic spirit of party," and he proposes cautiously that even pious thoughts are sufficient actions because "never was a sincere word utterly lost" (1:154; 112). Believing that a minister's primary duty is to help the congregation to a more intimate relationship with God, Emerson transforms "active virtue"--a term carrying explicitly civic connotations--into a drama of private circumstance.<sup>76</sup> As early as 1829, Emerson had come to the conclusion that "action is

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As Mary Cayton has pointed out, Emerson's conservative fears of public controversy and party strife derived from his Federalist upbringing (34-50). David Leverenz has also

only the realizing of the thought" (§ 2:105). Although this formulation can be read several ways, young Emerson's own political posture at that time was to dissuade his flock from participating in civic controversy (Cayton 34-50).

Rather than interpret Emerson's stand on action as politically naive or willfully disingenuous, it is possible to recognize several different discourses operating in Emerson's work simultaneously.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, Emerson's language of active virtue derives from Jonathan Edwards and Daniel Webster, not only in content but in style. Although Emerson never mentions the name of Webster in his sermons and early lectures, he is one of the unnamed "orators" whose mythos contrapuntally opposes Emerson's most conservative statements about the "infinite" of the private man. In this sense, Emerson's fleeting invocations of Webster allow him to celebrate a political ideal without dragging along with it the unruliness of partisan politics.

One of the intriguing examples of this paradigm--of Emerson's ability to summon the Webster myth and twist it with a new meaning--is the conclusion of Emerson's essay, "The Transcendentalist," in which Emerson defends the apparent inactivity of the transcendental student. Comparing various types of men to a variety of agricultural tools

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pointed out Emerson's debt to the Federalist strategy of co-opting the language of the opposition (45-46). In Emerson's case, the Boston Whigs claimed to stand for "active virtue," but their motives were anything but disinterested (Cayton 34-38). Perhaps one of the best illustrations of the Federalist/Whig paternalism of Emerson's sentiment while he was a minister is his comment, "But let us cleave, in the midst of parties, to an independence of party" (§ 2:187).

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See Wolfe for powerful critiques of Emerson's notion of action and Cavell's attempt to recuperate Emerson as a theorist of democratic praxis.

fit for different purposes. Emerson closes his address by likening the transcendentalist to a delicate scientific instrument

Perhaps too there might be room for the excitors and monitors, collectors of the heavenly spark with power to convey the electricity to others. Or, as the storm-tossed vessel at sea speaks the frigate or "line packet" to learn its longitude, so it may not be without its advantage that we should now and then encounter rare and gifted men, to compare the points of our spiritual compass, and verify our bearings from superior chronometers (LOA 208)

As schoolboys of the period would have noticed, Emerson's chronometer simile recalls Webster's electrifying speech, the "Second Reply to Hayne," which begins "When the mariner has been tossed for many days in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself in the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course." The exordium created a popular image of Webster as the captain of the American ship of state, seeing beyond "Foote's resolution," to discover the real issue of the debate: a state's attempt to nullify the Constitution. Emerson's transumptive appropriation of Webster in this passage fortifies the dreaming transcendentalist with the spirit of Webster's civic activism. The resulting paradox yields exactly the sense of pregnant irresolution which Emerson associated with active thought. If Emerson is often accused of articulating a subject who refuses to act politically, his apolitical rhetoric usually reintroduces a world of subjects who will act. Emerson admired Webster most for the way he spoke "with cause," and Emerson's sermons and essays often encourage the kind of activism Webster represented.

For Emerson himself, however, his love of eloquence was so great that he was

often felt confined by the requirements of having to speak “with cause” or keep to a given topic. He felt this restriction most poignantly in the ministry. He wrote in early 1830

Topics are the masters of the preacher. He cannot often write in the way he deems best and most level with life. He is obliged to humor his mind in the choice and development of his subject. When the sermon is done, he is aware that much of it is from the purpose and a good deal of it is & altogether it is unworthy of his conception of a good sermon. (JMN 3:182)

Although the Unitarian sermon of the 1820s had moved away from the “text, doctrine, application” format of the eighteenth-century Calvinism, Emerson still felt bound by the requirements of logical exposition and systematic analysis.

In Emerson’s opinion, the orator who successfully avoided any nagging attachment to logical exposition was Edward T. Taylor, the Methodist minister of the Seaman’s Bethel.<sup>78</sup> As David Reynolds has pointed out, Taylor’s oratory embodied “flexible form, passionate feeling, and native materials,” that Emerson wished to see in American literature (Beneath 19-22). Reynolds’ insight provides a crucial means of recognizing how oral expression was central to Emerson’s beliefs about language and the active mind.

As an orator, Taylor was most famous as a man of the people (which is why Matthiessen uses Taylor to promote the democratic thesis of American Renaissance). Emerson returns again and again in his journal to Taylor’s dramatic power with simple

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The amount of primary material by Taylor is scarce. The best single biographical source is Haven and Russell (1904), which includes a few snippets of Taylor’s sermons, Walt Whitman’s February 1887 Century article, and a February 1835 article from New England Magazine. Robert Collyer’s Father Taylor (1908) is basically a short digest of the Haven text. In his day, Taylor was known to the world at large through brief but colorful appearances in the travel writing of Martineau (2:210-215), Dickens (39-40), Jameson (188-192), Bremer (212-3) and Buckingham (3:233-34).

language, with "touching things, plain things, cogent things, grand things, which all men must perforce hear" (JMN 10:400). Emerson often remarks on the homespun appeal of Taylor's discourse, claiming Taylor brought together all the "various extremes of our little village society."<sup>79</sup> Emerson's adaptation of Taylor's democratic ethos is suggested by Emerson's new formulation for preaching, "when there is any difference of level felt in the footboard of the pulpit and the floor of the parlor, you have not said what you should say" (JMN 4:294). Emerson even tried to imitate Taylor's colloquial style when he spoke from Taylor's pulpit in 1835 by filling his sermon with Ah's!, O's!, aphorisms, and questions, and by choosing a theme characteristic of Taylor's simplicity and optimism: "Set your affections on things above" (S 4:236-43).

On another level, Emerson was drawn to the liveliness of Taylor's discourse. Emerson often summarized Taylor's preaching in pictorial terms which convey sight, sound, and meaning. Emerson was enchanted by Taylor's remark, "My voice is thunder" to declare how well he was--a phrase he would borrow in "The Poet"--or Taylor's comment that the fish he had caught were as "snappish" as the people of Groton (JMN 5:255, 87). It was not only Emerson who noticed this exceptional talent in Taylor. Even prior to the publication of Nature, an essay in New England Magazine proclaimed that Taylor's "mind grew up around things: no vague half ideas entered through it from the medium of arbitrary signs" (qtd in Haven lv).

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The only jarring detail in these accounts of Taylor as the quintessential democratic preacher is Harriet Martineau's criticism that Taylor continued to segregate his audiences by making blacks sit on the balcony of his chapel (215).

Later in life, Emerson retreated from crude forms of logocentric "presence," but the correspondence of spirit, word, and thing is one of the central themes of Nature. Emerson asserts a connection between the abstractions of philosophy and the phenomena of the natural world ("spirit means primarily wind," etc.) and he also points out the curious interdependence of the objects of the world on humankind, and vice versa. Emerson contends that the most powerful poets and orators of their day are the ones who experience this intimacy and who "hold primarily on nature." Referring to Webster's "primary imagery" in his journal in November of 1835, Emerson writes, "Let a man make the woods and fields his books then at the hour of passion his thoughts will invest themselves spontaneously with natural imagery" (JMN 5:106).<sup>80</sup>

The interrelation of Emerson's philosophy of language with his training in oratory is emphasized by Emerson's unacknowledged reference to Cato the Younger in Nature. Although Emerson repeats widely held theories of cultural declension available from a variety of authors (Thucydides, Sallust, Rollin, Gibbon, etc), his statement that "wise men pierce the rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things" is an explicit echo of Cato's reply to Caesar after the conspiracy of Catiline. Emerson read the speech in The Columbian Orator as a young boy.<sup>81</sup> Cato's stoicism made him an ideal figure in the

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George Ticknor, one of Webster's first hagiographers, reminds us that Webster composed his famous apostrophe to the soldiers of Bunker Hill while he was fishing near Barnstable. Ticknor overheard Webster addressing the brook trout as, "O, venerable men...." (Curtis 1: 250-1).

<sup>81</sup>

See the chapter on the Columbian Orator for a more complete discussion of what Cato's represented in the context of oratorical rhetoric. Emerson quoted a passage from the Columbian Orator in a letter he wrote to William Emerson in 1816 (L 17). On Dec 5th,

context of New England Calvinism, one which Emerson referred to in his journals and sermons with admiration (§ 2 32, 4 222) <sup>82</sup> Cato's argument that "we have long lost the right names of things," is the absent center of the Nature passage which describes the collapse of language.

A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, upon his love for truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, of praise,--and duplicity and falsehood take place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will, is in a degree lost [ . . . ] old words are perverted to

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1820, Emerson seriously considered the effect such books may have on the public eloquence with the comment: "It appears to me that it is a secret of the art of eloquence to know that a powerful aid would be derived from the use of forms of language which were generally known to Men in their infancy & which now under another and unknown garb but forcibly reminding them of early impressions are likely to be mistaken for opinions whose beginning they cannot recollect & therefore suppose them innate. At least if by such operation they cannot convince the mind they may serve to win attention by this awakening but ambiguous charm. By these forms of language I mean a paraphrase of some sentence in a Primer or other child's book common to the country --The spell would be more perfect perhaps if instead of such a paraphrase the words of a sentence should be modulated to the cadence of the aforesaid infant literature. I dare not subjoin an example" (JMN 1:46). The contents of this passage seem to be inspired by Emerson's reading of Archibald Alison: "There are songs also, that we have heard in our infancy, which when brought to our remembrance after years, raise emotions for which we cannot account" (27). Emerson's use of Cato in Nature has this effect. At the conclusion of Emerson's controversial Lord's Supper sermon, he draws on another of the Orator's speeches by Thomas Muir: "And whilst the thought of [the pastoral office's] claims oppresses me with a sense of my unworthiness, I am consoled by the hope that no time and no change can deprive me of the satisfaction of pursuing and exercising its highest functions" (§ 4:194). Muir's passage from The Columbian Orator concludes, "I may be doomed to ascend the scaffold. Nothing can deprive me of the recollection of the past; nothing can destroy my inward peace of mind, arising from the remembrance of having discharged my duty" (43).

<sup>82</sup>

See also Plutarch's Lives and Montaigne's short essay on "Cato the Younger," both of which Emerson read.

stand for things which are not (LOA 22)

The harder Emerson pushes his explication of the primary relation to language, the more he leans toward the register of the political sublime in the figura of Cato, consciously or not, the entire passage is a free revision of the speech he read in his youth. The piquancies of the backwoodsman become “keys of power” and “volcanoes.” The pleasures of Taylor’s figurations emanate from the ethical righteousness of Cato, whose paternal voice thunders in the background to validate Emerson’s philosophy. Although Thomas Gustafson has remarked that Emerson taps “the energy of words charged by the political action of oratory to criticize and transcend oratory.” Emerson uses the truly great political orator to supply moral ballast to his language theory, an act that neatly prefigures the section on “Discipline” which follows (377)

Curiously, however, Emerson locates the moral center of the powerful orator not in discipline, but in abandonment to the chthonic power of nature (Cavell, Senses, “Aversion”) By harnessing the primordial and volcanic forces of language, the orator risks losing logic, direction, and identity. If he is lucky, however, the orator is guided by a reciprocal and occult relation to the audience. According to most accounts, the magic of Taylor’s oratory was his direct contact with the audience—he spoke with people, not just at them. In his closing thoughts on Taylor’s genius, Emerson meditates on the consequences of Taylor’s abandonment to his muse:

What an eloquence he suggests. Ah could he guide those grand seahorses of his, with which he rides & caracoles on the waves of the sunny ocean. But no, he sits and is drawn up & down the ocean currents by the strong seamonsters;—only on that condition that he shall not guide. One orator makes many. How many orators sit mute there below. They come to get

justice done to that ear & intuition which no Chatham & no Demosthenes has begun to satisfy (JMN 10:402)

Although Emerson could criticize Taylor for want of logic and compare his bold imagery to the ignis fatuus of swamp gas, it is precisely his emptiness that points to the particular character of his oratorical subjectivity:

Leave him alone & there is no man. There is no substance, but a relation. [ . . . ] I think every hearer feels that something like it were possible to himself, if he could consent. [ . . . ] He runs for luck, & by readiness to say everything, good & bad, now and then he says the best things. Then a new will & understanding organize themselves in this new sphere of no-will and no-understanding (JMN 10:402-3)

Taylor's metamorphosis through dialectic self-evacuation is an important instance, if not a description, of Emerson's own habits with language. As recent Emerson commentary attests, Emerson's experiments with thought and writing are exploratory and liquid, their terms redefine themselves. The voice of the writer is unstable. Emerson explores the analogy between words and speakers when he discusses the way Taylor redistributes the significance of a word. Just as Taylor gives himself over to the possibilities of a "new will," his language undergoes a similar transformation: "Everything dances and disappears.--changes becomes its contrary.--in his sculpturing hands. How he played with the words Lost yesterday! Lost became found in the twinkling of an eye" (JMN 10:401).

Emerson's comments about Taylor provide a means for understanding a particular experience which Emerson associates with the speaking moment: individuality fades into participation; speaker and community participate in a vision. Although Emerson frequently characterizes the orator in terms of heroic individualism, his descriptions of the social moment of eloquence suggest a vastly different model of human identity than the

“imperial” Emersonian subject developed by Quentin Anderson, Richard Poirier, and Stanley Cavell<sup>83</sup>

### **Heidegger, the Log Cabin Campaign, and “Circles”**

As Emerson’s tributes to Father Taylor’s oratory suggest, oratorical performance manifested a refreshing sense of “being” (ontology) for Emerson. Speaker and audience conspire in the collective generation of a new identity. Like Cavell, I believe Heidegger’s concept of worlding in the “Origin of the Work of Art” is a useful means of understanding Emerson’s interest in the moment of public eloquence. But rather than defining Emerson’s work as a study in negation, as Cavell does, I wish to explore the peculiar, and possibly simultaneous, spirit of presence and identity to which Emerson often refers in his

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The conflation of these very different scholars is only to point out their promotion of an empty Emersonian individual, a valuable concept in itself but which obscures the quality I’m trying to describe in Emerson’s writing and oratory. Following Emerson’s journal entry in which he declares he is always preaching the “infinite of the private man” (JMN 7:342) these critics emphasize the priority of the Emersonian self’s ceaseless rejection of anything that confines it. Although these critics discuss Emerson’s involvement in a social world, they provide little motive or mechanism through which the individual acts socially. Quentin Anderson, from whose work I derive the term “imperial subject,” argues passionately to put Emerson back into a historical and social milieu as a preacher but smuggles Emerson’s radical individuality through the back door as the “post-social” commitment of “secular incarnation” (3-58). Richard Poirier associates “self obliteration” (Renewal 193) with “possibilities for personal and cultural renewal” (Poetry 11), but he is much more interested in applauding Emerson’s individual genius than in explaining how that literary genius supports the maintenance of community. Similarly, Cavell appreciates Emerson’s effort to move beyond the hypothetical category of individual subjectivity (Senses 127), but he continually re-inscribes the model of an “aversive” individual (“Aversive,” New). I argue that Emerson’s passion for oratory blends the edges of the self in a literary sense with the social world, and Emerson’s oratorical identity also enmeshes him in a Calvinist liberal paradigm which, as Alan Heimert has pointed out, equates “freedom” with “doing what is right” (Heimert 108-110;312).

discussions of public eloquence <sup>84</sup> (I say simultaneous because it may turn out that the very "presence" I wish to describe is a moment best characterized as "transience.") While we needn't diminish the importance of Emerson's radical individualism, at the same time we must recognize that Emerson's experiences as both a listener and speaker attuned him to a highly social identity during the experience of public speech. In this sense, what I plan to pursue in Emerson is not an investigation his "aversion" from conformity (Cavell) or "writing off the self" (Poirier, Renewal), where presence is constantly evacuated, but rather Emerson's awareness that something fleeting but magnificent-- "the fiery life of the moment"--develops in the relation between speakers and hearers (W 7 95). Such a moment of eloquence has strongly religious roots but I shall turn to Heidegger rather than the Puritan sermon because of the increasing secularization of Emerson's thought.<sup>85</sup>

Emerson's belief in the power of feeling, sentiment, and sympathy form an important bridge between Emerson's literary and political interests. Of course, a belief in the innate origins of these emotions was central to Common Sense philosophy, where the phenomenon of human sympathy was used to deny the assertion that the our knowledge of the world is derived entirely from empirical sensation. Emerson's teachers at Harvard never denied the existence of sympathy or its great importance--men's sympathies, however difficult they were to define, were granted as innate. While a student at Harvard,

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Cavell argues that for Emerson, thinking is aversion, is always turning away from the mob and from identity ("Aversive").

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For studies of the religious aspects of Emerson's theory of performance see Anderson; Bercovitch, Jeremiad; and Toulouse.

Emerson's concern with the power of sympathy appears several times in his early notebooks where he meditates on the "oppressive sense of desperate depravity" shared by most people in the middle ages (JMN 1:126, 304). He is unable to understand why such "sympathies of fear" reigned, but he describes it in terms of a communicable phenomenon, citing the way sadness moves among mourners at a funeral (2:318-22). In the same vein, Emerson's uncanny obsession with the face of Martin Gay also leads him to think about the power of sympathy (1:39, 52). Emerson's sermons also show a developing faith in the ideas, passions and affectations of the mind as important signs of sublime capacity. The young minister was interested in the psychology of faith: the importance of the idea of God (sermons 6, 11, 23), the feeling of duty (sermon 45, 104), and the concept of charity (sermons 40, 77, 79, 134). Emerson's enthusiasm for public discourse, particularly the political orators he admired, was their means of evoking feelings as well as ideas.

As Stanley Cavell has eloquently demonstrated in the appendix to The Senses of Walden, Emerson's writing is crucially oriented around the exposition of mood. Emerson writes, "the solution of Napoleon whose life I have been reading, lies in my feelings and fancies as I loiter by the rippling water" (JMN 5:487). The affectations of the soul, "passions," in the older sense of the term, are what inspire Emerson. Thus, the manipulation of sympathy through oratory fascinated Emerson. Oratory provided a literary approach to those unruly moods--a skill he would summarize as the power "to alter in a pair of hours, perhaps in a half hour's discourse, the convictions and habits of years" (W 7:64).

For Emerson, the power of a literary act emerges in the interaction of speaker and

audience, but his characterizations of this relationship are not always consistent. Emerson sometimes describes the orator in terms of a heroic individual whose job is to bend the audience to his will (Sloan). In his 1847 and 1867 lectures on "Eloquence" he speaks of the orator as a "true potentate" taking "sovereign possession" of the audience. But at the same time, in his 1847 lecture on "Eloquence," Emerson establishes the importance of sympathy as one of the foundational dynamics of the oratorical experience:

An audience is not a simple addition of the individuals that compose it. Their sympathy gives them a certain social organism, which fills each member, in his own degree, and most of all the orator, as a jar in a battery is charged with the whole electricity of the battery. (W 7:63)

As Teresa Toulouse has shown, egalitarian currents of Protestant theology and Romantic psychology combine in Emerson's respect for the audience: "the preacher may speak the Spirit in his words, but it requires the Spirit in the audience to complete his act" (124). Emerson's characterization of sympathy, accessible to the orator and audience alike, balances his descriptions of the orator's leadership. The eloquent orator vocalizes what members of the audience feel themselves. This moment of unity is not an imperial spectacle, but a shared coming-to-knowledge: "In perfect eloquence, the hearer would lose the sense of dualism; of hearing from another" (JMN 7:52). Harshly criticizing his brother's oratory, Emerson advised Charles to "find" and entreat his audience rather than attempt to rule over it (L 1:239-40). In another instance, discussing his enthusiasm for the new genre of the lecture Emerson declared the orator is successful only when "he is himself agitated & is as much a hearer as any in the assembly" (JMN 7:225).

For Emerson, oratory creates new senses of identity:

humble persons are conscious of new illumination: narrow brows expand with enlarged affectations:--delicate spirits, long unknown to themselves, masked and muffled in coarsest fortunes, who now hear their own native language for the first time, and leap to hear it. But all these several audiences, each above each, which successively appear to greet the variety of style and topic, are really composed out of the same persons: nay, sometimes the same individual will take an active part in them all, in turn (W 7:67)

When Emerson describes how one person may have a sufficiently diverse emotional range to respond to all the various personae the orator evokes, he suggests a mobile and provisional sense of the self. For Emerson, people experience the world from a variety of positions. But unlike the ever changing moods of Poirier's "performing self"--whose identity is scoured from a perpetual peeling off of the not-me--these moods are formed in resonance with the passion of others. This is a portrait of multiple unions, not serial negations. Emerson's descriptions of eloquence insist that something meaningful, though transient, materializes between audience and orator. The experience is undeniable, though hard to pin down. Emerson attempts to analyze its rhetorical components in terms of a speaker's vivacity, clear statements of fact, memorable images, moral sentiment and gravity, but ends up giving the impression that eloquence is in the end, a "grave" and moral synthesis of everything.

Heidegger's remarks in "The Origins of the Work of Art" provide a useful parallel to the experience Emerson finds in oratory. For Heidegger, identity is formed in context, not isolation. Fruitfully grounded in the impressions of "unconcealment" and "illumination," Heidegger's definition of "Being" occurs in a lifeworld where isolated "subjects" and "objects" are not the principal categories of identity. The examples he uses

are Van Gogh's peasant shoes and a Greek temple. In both, identity emerges in collusion with the environment: the temple gathers strength and meaning from the rough nature that surrounds it. Like Emerson's description of a speech's influence on a speaker and audience, Heidegger argues that the work of art draws on a reciprocal relationship between earth (substrate) and world (culture). The work summons and clarifies the environment in a paradoxical moment of origination, where its presence accentuates the terms of its existence. A synergy takes place which creates and intensifies the identities of all the aspects of the work--the very phenomenon of Being exposes itself in concentrated manner: "the rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock, metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to say" (171).

Emerson's repeated references to the "gleams" of a successful performance take on a similar tone, not only for their invocations of chthonic force but for their attention to the relational importance of orator, audience and occasion. The audience is helped by the orator, as the orator is by the occasion. To borrow Emerson's term from Nature, they "conspire." The result is a shining forth in which "you may and shall (please God) yet see the electricity part from the cloud & shine from one part of the heaven to the other" (JMN: 7.225).<sup>86</sup> Vocalized through the orator, the gleam is a collective phenomenon.

Writing in his journal, Emerson describes the double birth of an oration, the second sense the work of art gives itself:

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For readings of the relationship of science to Emerson's literary aesthetics, see Lee Rust Brown, and Joan Richardson. Eric Wilson's forthcoming work, Emerson's Sublime Science, is particularly useful in describing the relationship of Emerson's allusive style to the polar oscillations of electricity.

out of the quarry you have erected a temple, soaring in due gradation, turret over tower to heaven, cheerful with thorough-lights, majestic with strength, desired of all eyes. You will find the matter less cumbersome, it even seems less when put in order, and the discourse as fresh & agreeable at the conclusion as at the commencement. Moreover, if a natural order is obediently followed, the composition will have an abiding charm to yourself as well as to others: you will see that you were the scribe of a higher wisdom than your own, and it will remain to you like one of nature's works pleasant & wholesome, & not as our books often are, a disagreeable remembrance to the author

A man may find his words mean more than he thought when he uttered them & be glad to employ them again in a new sense (JMN, 5:409, emphasis mine)

One of the remarkable things about this passage is its rejection of "books" to highlight the world generated by a spoken discourse. Like Heidegger's temple, Emerson's oration hints at the play of other forces at work in its construction. A force of the natural order, what Heidegger calls aletheia (the disclosure of truth), emerges from art.

Oratory provides a crucial means of renewal in Emerson's "Circles," the essay generally thought to mark the transition between the optimism of Nature and Emerson's tragic awareness of the provisionality of knowledge in "Experience."<sup>87</sup> "Circles," however, discovers compensation for the transience of thought in the celebration of eloquence. Through vocality, Emerson discovers a form of Being-with-others to replace his concern for the world of Ideas-in-themselves. In other words, Emerson identifies a

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This interpretation of "Circles" has roots in Whicher (94-105) and is constantly used by both Poirier and Cavell. Neufeldt and Barr, in their Derridean reading of "Circles," argue the essay enacts a deconstructive epistemology. Although Neufeldt and Barr often use the word "voice" in their analysis of the essay, their entire framework is so oriented around writing that the complex dynamics of the spoken word--and the collaborative sense of identity that comes with speech--are hardly considered.

new ontology to surmount a problem of epistemology<sup>88</sup> Emerson celebrates the aural and shared phenomenon of speech as one of the primary joys of human development. Drawn from journal tributes to Webster, Taylor, Channing and Everett, "Circles" is an exposition of the serial triumphs of conversation and public eloquence.

Largely composed from a series of journal entries written in the late spring and summer of 1840 (and reworked for publication in 1841), "Circles" took form during the electioneering of the Whig's Log Cabin campaign, one of the most sensational contests of party rhetoric in American history.<sup>89</sup> Capitalizing on the popular unrest caused by the depression of 1837, the Whigs launched an unusually boisterous campaign, fielding close to 100,000 people at Harrison's nomination (Gunderson 3). Fifteen acres of men and 6000 women camped for the weekend at Tippecanoe to celebrate Harrison's defeat of the forces of Tecumseh's brother, the Prophet (109). Drawing on the populist strategies the Democrats used in 1828, the Whigs composed a book of campaign songs and even a dance, "The Tippecanoe, or the Log-Cabin Quickstep." The rhetoric and stump oratory was also sensational: Webster went hoarse from the many speeches he gave between January and November of 1840. At one point he spoke from the top of Mt. Stratton, Vermont, to a crowd estimated between 15, 000 and 50,000 people, with the words, "From the clouds, I address you [...] encamped with the Green Mountain boys on the

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At one point toward the end of the essay, Emerson explicitly rejects the priority of Knowledge over Being when he says, "so to be is the sole inlet of so to know. [...] I cast away in this new moment all my once hoarded knowledge, as vacant and vain" (LOA 413).

<sup>89</sup> For a rich study of the Log Cabin campaign, see Gunderson.

summit of these far famed hills" (180)

Although Emerson never mentions the details of the campaign in "Circles," he remarks in his journal about a great multi-colored sphere which the Whigs rolled through Concord on July 4th:

The simplest things are always better than curiosities. The most imposing part of this Harrison celebration of the Fourth of July in Concord as in Baltimore was this ball, 12 or 13 feet in diameter which as it mounts the little heights & descends the little slopes of the road draws all eyes with a certain sublime movement especially as the imagination is incessantly addressed with its political significancy. So the Log Cabin is a lucky watchword. (JMN 7:378-9)

Emerson's interest in the "significancy" of the Log Cabin slogan is poetic. The "lucky watchword" of the Log Cabin campaign derived from the Whig's appropriation of an insult. A Democratic newspaper editor once claimed that the Whig candidate Harrison would be happier sitting in a log cabin drinking from a barrel of hard cider. The Whigs unexpectedly welcomed the charge and made it into the theme of their campaign, carrying around log cabin floats and distributing hard cider. Speaking of his own log cabin origins in a speech in Saratoga, Webster nearly cried (Gunderson 180; Webster, Speeches 476-77). Although Emerson privately despised electioneering and didn't seek to emulate the cheap eloquence it brought to his mind, "Circles" is a profound meditation on the social dialectic of oratory (JMN 5:203).

The most important connection between Emerson's essay and the oratory of Log-Cabin campaign is suggested by the genesis of the parade ball which Emerson discusses in his journal. The ball was designed in response to a long political controversy caused by the Senate's censure of President Jackson in 1834, after Jackson fired his Secretary of the

Treasury for refusing to remove the government deposits from the Bank of the United States. In 1836, Democratic senator Thomas Hart Benton, still fuming over the Senate's resolution, moved to "expunge" the censure from the Congressional record. Responding to Webster's complaint that he was attempting to "disfigure" the official records of the government, Benton argued that his bill would not disfigure the Senate records because "the matter expunged would not be destroyed. It is incorporated into the expunging resolution and lives on as long as that lives" (qtd in Meigs 234). Benton's resolution asked that the censure be circled and the words "expunged" be written over it. Although Benton had few supporters, he pushed the bill for three years, finally passing the Expunging Resolution in 1839 with the belief it would have a strong effect on the following summer's election (Meigs 233). In a heady speech just prior to the bill's enactment, Benton declared,

I finish the task which, three years ago, I imposed on myself. Solitary and alone, and amidst the jeers and taunts of my opponents, I put this ball in motion. The people have taken it up and rolled it forward and I am no longer anything but a unit in the vast mass which now propels it. In the name of that mass I speak. I demand the execution of the will of the people. (238, emphasis mine)

After this speech, the secretary brought forward the manuscript record of the Senate, and the motion to censure was carried out, as Benton had specified, by circling the resolution in "broad, black lines" (339). The Democrats literally inscribed the Whig censure of Jackson within a greater sphere of discourse.

The following summer, the Whigs conceived of using Benton's "rolling ball" against him by parading giant spheres from north to south, covered in campaign slogans.

One ball in Baltimore featured the poem

This Democratic Ball  
 Set rolling first by Benton  
 Is on another track  
 From that it first was sent on [ . . . ]  
 As rolls the ball  
 Van's [Buren's] reign doth fall  
 And he must look  
 To Kinterhook [ . . . ]  
 "The Gathering ball is rolling still,  
 and still gathering as it rolls." ("National" 155)

The election ball signified the Whig's co-optation of Benton's glory. The four-year Expunging controversy dramatized the idea that gains of one party could be incorporated at a later date by the opposing one. Initiated by Jackson's attack on the bank, the strategy was successfully used by both the Democrats and the Whigs. Emerson's essay begins with a drama which would have been instantly noticeable to his peers:

The man finishes his story.--how good! how final! how it puts a new face on all things! He fills the sky. Lo! on the other side rises also a man, and draws a circle around the circle we had just pronounced the outline of the sphere. Then already is our first speaker not man, but only a first speaker. His only redress is to draw a circle outside his antagonist. And so men do by themselves. (LOA 405)

While the circles of Emerson's essay have often been discussed as epistemological metaphors, Emerson's illustration derives from political and aural experience. More than simply sketching the bounds of knowledge, Emerson describes the public story as an act of worlding, of constituting the sphere of the world, which necessarily involves the public participation in the speaker's achievement as well as recognition of the speaker's power itself. The circle Emerson describes is not just a topographical boundary, but a lifeworld with ideas, agents, speakers and audiences--the Whig's political Ball. Emerson returned

to the image two months later to remark: "See how fond of symbols people are. See the Great Ball which they roll from Baltimore to Bunker Hill [ ... ] They say and think that they hate poetry and all sorts of moonshine, & they are all the while mystics and transcendentalists." a remark which explicitly ties the political gimmick to the symbolism of his essay (JMN 7:394)

Emerson's reference to the man who "fills the sky" also refers to Emerson's waning estimate of Ellery Channing, about whom Emerson had written, "Once Dr Channing filled our sky. Now we become so conscious of his limits & of the difficulty attending any effort to show him our point of view, that we doubt if it be worth while" (JMN 5:329). Following up this thought in "Circles" Emerson writes, "Infinitely alluring and attractive was he to you yesterday, a great hope, a sea to swim in; now you have found his shores, found it a pond, and you care not if you see it again" (LOA 406). Central to the poet's discontent is the man who had textualized himself into fixed doctrine - a person who no longer experiences the dialectical evanescence of thought

The idea of growth through speech presides over the section of "Circles" that begins, "Conversation is a game of circles. In conversation we pluck up the termini which bound the common of silence on every side" (LOA 408). The sentences come from Emerson's journal, just after his reflections about an "exhilarating" evening he had spent with Father Taylor. Emerson describes the meeting with characteristic infatuation with Taylor, but he emphasizes the communal bond generated through conversation with the orator. "how willingly every man is willing to be nothing in his presence, to share this surprising emanation & be steeped & ennobled by the new wine of this eloquence" (JMN

7 359, emphasis mine)

The thoughts which this orator brings to Emerson's mind, however, are disclosed in the essay in the context of good conversation. As developed in "Circles" Emerson enjoys watching the "cloven" flame of eloquence pass from speaker to speaker. Emerson is less interested in the timeless value of Pentecostal truth, than he is in the activity of speakerly participation as a spirit of Pentecostal regeneration. The words of each speaker kindle the next discovery. Emerson defines conversation as Socratic dialectic: speech is an instrument to provoke and engage thinking, not thinking itself. The paradox inherent in Emerson's claim "O what truths profound and executable only in ages and orbs are supposed in the announcement of every truth," suggest that a greater, mythic truth glimmers behind the declaration of a truth.

While Emerson may have in mind the mode of conversation enjoyed among his Transcendental club friends, the passage on conversation describes oratory as a kind of "conversation" in terms of the orator's relationship to the audience. Emerson's next sentences commemorate the magic Everett once exerted on his imagination.

We all stand waiting, empty, knowing, possibly that we can be full, surrounded by mighty symbols which are not symbols to us, but prose and trivial toys. Then cometh the god, and converts the statues into fiery men, and by the flash of his eye burns up the veil which shrouded all things, and the meaning of the very furniture, of cup and saucer, of chair and clock and tester, is manifest. The facts which loomed so large in the fogs of yesterday,--property, climate, breeding, personal beauty and the like, have strangely changed their proportions. All that we reckoned settled shakes and rattles; and literatures, cities, climates and religions, leave their foundations and dance before our eyes. (408)

The magic produced by the god-like orator is both momentary and participatory. The

union of speaker and audience transforms “statues into fiery men.” And although the triumphant moment will be eclipsed by yet another, the truths of history are renewed in the tissue of performance

As we see in Father Taylor’s surrender to the forces of eloquence, Emerson’s sense of successful oratory is closely tied to the concept of “abandonment,” a word he associates with oracular genius at the end of “Circles.” Abandonment is one of the keywords in Stanley Cavell’s description of Emersonian thought. In Cavell’s The Senses of Walden, he argues that Emerson uses the term in several ways, as “enthusiasm,” as “shunning,” and as “trust” (139). In Cavell’s essay, “Aversive Thinking,” written several years later, however, Cavell focuses almost exclusively on the middle sense, Emerson’s abandonment as aversion. For Cavell, the key to “Circles” is in its tireless negativity, its aversion to thought-restricting thoughts.

But Emerson uses the word abandonment in another way: “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. The way of life is wonderful: it is by abandonment” (LOA 414). While abandonment can mean aversion in this passage, it also refers to giving over or consent--the consent to enthusiasm, to chthonic powers beyond the control of the individual. Several times in his journal, Emerson defines true eloquence as the ability to “let out all the reins,” suggesting that orators must abandon themselves to “the instruction flowing in from all sides” (JMN 5:459, 469; LOA 412). The act of such abandonment is what makes “the verge of today the new centre” of a circle (410). The poet’s discussion of prudence as the ability to abandon oneself to a great trust connects the orator’s performance with the creation of a new orbit (410). If it is the brazen voice of the speaker

and the excited sympathy of the audience which constitute the new world, the aversive models of Emersonian selfhood are incomplete (though at times, very accurate) pictures of Emersonian identity

One of the most characteristic elements of Emersonian discourse, strongly apparent in "Circles," is the ever-changing voice of Emerson's lectures and individual sentences. Emerson's poet is constantly performing throughout his essays, never staying still, putting on shows and speaking from several different positions. Although such voicing shares a great deal with the aversive subjectivity defined by Poirier and Cavell, the oracular poet's mobility derives from affiliation rather than negation. Sympathy with the audience is what holds together the Emerson's contradictory postures

In "Circles," Emerson plays with the contrast of opposing voices when he abruptly inserts a voice which claims

And thus, O circular philosopher, I hear some reader exclaim, you have arrived at a fine Pyrrhonism, at an equivalence and indifferency of all actions, and would fain teach us that, if we are true, forsooth, our crimes may be lively stones out of which we shall construct the temple of the true God' (411)

Conspicuously summoning a dramatic voice of counterpoint, Emerson argues against himself. But he demonstrates here what his aphorisms also seem to suggest, that many statements are true if spoken--and heard--in the right mood. The exclamation of the skeptical reader is persuasive; but so too is the poet's brave response: "I am careful not to justify myself." At one point Emerson describes the ceaseless flux of dialectic transformation; at another he speaks of the principle of fixity. The message is not in the substance of these doctrines but in the warm breath of their social articulation--the cloven

flame of active conversation.

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Emerson's valorization of eloquence puts a deeply active and political force at the center of his literary style. Adopting the techniques he learned from Everett, Webster, and Taylor, Emerson attempted to give his writing the same dynamic appeal that he admired in his mentors. Dialectically unstable and yet politically engaged, the voice of oratory inspires the elusive triumphs of Emerson's work. Rather than seeing language as a corruption of truth, an always-already leftover of the Fall, an appreciation for oratory allows us to glimpse the productive structures of language which Emerson inhabited all his life.

## Chapter 4

### Voices of Instruction: Oratory and Discipline in Fenimore Cooper's Republic

At the beginning of Michael Gilmore's essay on James Fenimore Cooper in the Cambridge History of American Literature, he asks the vexing question of whether Cooper should be read as a "republican" or "liberal" novelist (676). Is Cooper fondly attempting to recover the collectivist republican values of the Revolutionary generation, or does he look forward to the market economy of Jacksonian liberalism, finding satisfaction in the autonomous power of selling books? The answer, in Gilmore's view, is both. While Cooper had nostalgia for the older, oral culture represented by Natty Bumppo in The Pioneers, he was also strongly invested in the modern profession of authorship and the business of marketing literary commodities. Gilmore compares Cooper's position to the figure of Harvey Birch, the peddler-patriot of Cooper's third novel, The Spy. As a writer, Cooper energetically supported himself as a "peddler" of fiction and yet his novels themselves often pay tribute to the patriotic ideals of an earlier age.

Cooper's struggle with republicanism is clearly reflected in his difficult novel, The Last of the Mohicans. In Mohicans, Cooper is strongly drawn to a principle of republican justice that could discipline the antagonistic forces of American democracy. But with its conspicuous civic rhetoric and tragic conclusion, the novel apparently withdraws from the possibility of a republican fusion of Native and white cultures.<sup>90</sup> Some of Cooper's critics

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With some misgivings I use the terms Indian, Native, and Native American interchangeably. Because all these terms have drawbacks, I use tribal designations where possible. With the death of Cora and Uncas, the novel apparently destroys the possibility of racial union, sexual or otherwise. This interpretation is emphasized by Leslie Fiedler.

have gone so far as to claim that Cooper advocated the extermination of the Indians as a necessary means of consolidating the republic and subduing national strife (Fisher, Pearce). While Cooper does promote the myths of savagism with which many Americans justified the removal of the Indians, Cooper's own relationship to Native-American culture was complex. He regretted the degraded condition of many tribes in upstate New York, but he admired Native-American eloquence, and like many American authors of the period, he used his Native characters to address the problems of white America. The self-interested demagoguery of Magua, the brash nobility of Uncas, and the grandfatherly wisdom of Tamenund each lay claim to the young nation's identity. The question Cooper asks in Mohicans is which of these claimants to national identity, the business interest, the patriot, or the philosopher, would emerge as the dominant influence on American politics in the 1820s.

Torn between these competing ideals of government, Cooper attempted to fuse them in a pluralist republican vision. At the center of The Last of the Mohicans is Cooper's recognition that republicanism is not a single-voiced doctrine, but a struggle. Cooper illustrates this struggle on several levels. First, the novel is a drama of civic deliberation. Both Native and white characters have the opportunity to lay their cases before the reader, giving impassioned speeches about their specific beliefs. Second, Cooper's faith in a republican union of race and faction emerges in the paradoxes of "separatism" voiced by many of the characters. Despite the claims of many of the

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Philip Fisher, and Jane Tompkins. See James Wallace, Geoffrey Rans, and Forrest Robinson for alternative interpretations of Cooper's views on amalgamation.

characters that they are “pure,” such as Natty’s boast that he’s a “man without a cross.” the novel criticizes simplistic notions of racial and national purity both in its plot and rhetoric. The similarities in the rhetorical conduct of Magua and Montcalm, the British and the French, and Natty and Chingachgook, undermine their claims to racial or national exceptionalism. While announcing their great differences, these figures begin to resemble each other, suggesting that there is a republican discourse that can resolve their conflict. In Cooper’s novel, whites and Indians share not only a separatist philosophy but borrow literary techniques from each other. As Alan MacGregor has shown in his history of the Tammany Society, by the time of Mohicans, American political oratory had a long tradition of appropriating Native postures. And as I shall show, Native orators also borrowed white ideas and made them their own, too. Both whites and Natives absorbed aspects of the cultures they opposed, and both waxed eloquent about their own purity. Finally, Cooper’s commitment to republicanism is emphasized by the tragic conclusion of Mohicans. Although civic oratory is unable to forestall the novel’s martial debacles, the novel’s conclusion indicts the mechanics of personal and national self-interest, not republican justice. The failure of Cooper’s orators is thus an invigoration of the principle of collective justice. Through their words, even Magua’s, Cooper criticizes the self-interested spirit of the modern age.

Cooper’s strategy, however, is not to recover a patrician, monological ideal of republican virtue. For example, Tamenund, the nearest representative of disinterested judgement that the novel offers, is incapable of managing the opposing claims of the white and Native voices. Rather, Cooper embodies his republicanism in the dialogics of public

discourse. For Cooper, modern republicanism is manifested in discourse, not lectures. As the dialogues of Natty, Chingachgook, and Uncas illustrate, their success emerges from collaboration, not individualism. Further, the polyvocal tones of Cooper's orators, often sounding both white and Native, manifest the symptoms of intercultural dialogue. From this turmoil of debate, Cooper extracts a utopian and polyphonic voice of American justice, which, though lacking a neat resolution to the racial social conflicts of Jacksonian America, attempted to establish a collaborative principle of justice that both whites and Native Americans could share.

### **Heckewelder's Tecumseh**

One of the most notorious icons of Indian oratory in Cooper's day was Tecumseh, a figure who manipulated, and was constructed by, the clashing political forces of his day. Tecumseh bears intriguing resemblances to Cooper's early protagonists because, like Harvey Birch, he straddled two worlds. Tecumseh stridently advocated Indian separatism but he spoke in a language whites could understand. He celebrated Native traditions but he defended tribal land rights by exploiting European concepts of land ownership. He was a fearless warrior and yet highly compassionate to his prisoners. Tecumseh was an American enigma, precisely the sort of ambiguous figure to which Cooper was drawn in his fiction.

Although it is well known that Cooper drew extensively from John Heckewelder's 1818 History in the *Leather-stocking Tales*, his adaptation of Heckewelder's portrayal of Tecumseh has never been discussed. Heckewelder, who was generally sympathetic to the Native-American cause, demonized Tecumseh as a bloodthirsty demagogue. Heckewelder

was concerned that Tecumseh governed Indians “through means of their passions” rather than through their intellect (295)

Heckewelder, however, was misinformed. Although he correctly noted that Tecumseh was a powerful orator and fighter, he also reported that Tecumseh made claim to supernatural powers and had opposing Indian leaders, such as Leatherlips, put to death for not supporting him (297). Heckewelder apparently confused Tecumseh for his brother, the Prophet Tenskwatawa, and combined the myths of both into one person, whom Heckewelder named “Tecumseh.”

It is easy to see why Tecumseh’s brother, Tenskwatawa, would have offended Heckewelder and provided Cooper with the material for a complex villain. The nineteenth-century historian Benjamin Drake writes that Tenskwatawa was a boastful drunk, considerably overshadowed by his brother. When the village medicine man died in 1804, Tenskwatawa saw an opportunity to increase his prestige. One night he claimed he saw visions, and changed his name from Laulewasikaw (meaning “rattle” or “noisemaker”) to Tenskwatawa (meaning “open door”). He henceforth became known as the Prophet (63-87). Although Tenskwatawa went on to create an ingenious framework for Indian confederacy, his methods of intimidation and violence caused many of his peers and opponents to distrust him. Heckewelder, unaware the brothers were different people, gave Tecumseh the reputed characteristics of his brother--ambition, envy, deceit, malice--in short, the salient attributes of Magua.

Other literary resonances, such as Shakespeare’s Shylock and Milton’s Satan, also inflect Cooper’s portrayal, but Magua’s speech and behavior rely extensively on

Heckewelder's synthesis of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa. Cooper captures the malevolence of Heckewelder's descriptions when he describes Magua's wild passions and "gleams of exultation" in Chapters 1 and 2. Magua's eyes "glisten like a fiery star amid lowering clouds" (1:18). Tecumseh was often associated with this image, not only because his name means "shooting star," but because Tecumseh also prophesied the comet of 1811.<sup>91</sup>

Heckewelder's misrepresentation of Tecumseh was even more unusual in that it diverged significantly from mainstream American opinion. Tecumseh, like Black Hawk after him, was mythologized as an American hero even while he was alive (Slotkin 358-69, 426-431). Although Tecumseh fought consistently against the Americans, by the early 1820s he appeared in John Pierpont's school-book, The First-Class Reader, as a heroic figure. Even at the end of the War of 1812, the Niles Register recorded the death of "Brigadier-general Tecumseh" with tones of respect and regret.<sup>92</sup>

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All citations from The Last of the Mohicans are taken from the SUNY Albany edition, 1983. Because so many other texts are available I also include chapter references. Virtually every fact associated with Tecumseh is controversial. Stephen Ruddell, who grew up as Tecumseh's boyhood companion, wrote that his name means "blazing comet" because his mother saw a comet the night he was born (Galloway 128). Vanderwerth translates Tecumseh's name to mean "cougar crouching for his prey" (61) and Tucker adds it may also mean "I crossed somebody's path" (19). Concerning Tecumseh's prediction of the comet of 1811, see Pesantubbee, Sugden and McDaniel. Whether Tecumseh actually did predict it or not, he was popularly associated with shooting stars. Note also the ominous description of nightfall in Chapter 19 where Cooper recalls the image of Magua's eyeballs peering from the forest: "Here and there, a red and fiery star struggled through the drifting vapor, furnishing a lurid gleam of brightness to the dull aspect of the heavens" (19:190).

<sup>92</sup> See Niles Weekly Register, Nov 6, 1813: 172-5; Apr. 16, 1814: 111-12.

There are several explanations why Tecumseh, an arch-critic of American expansion, was so quickly appropriated by Americans. On one level, he was admired as an Indian adversary of genius. Even Indian haters like Lewis Cass grudgingly admitted that Tecumseh was skillful, firm and politic ("Hunter" 98). William Harrison, governor of the Michigan territory during Tecumseh's opposition, wrote that Tecumseh was "one of those uncommon geniuses, which spring up occasionally to produce revolutions and overturn the established order of things" (Vogel 135). His resourceful opposition to white expansion earned him the respect of many Americans. After his death, they exonerated their consciences by building up the reputation of their foe. Respect for Tecumseh's fierce independence prompted a typological revision of his career to conform with the spirit of Revolutionary activism. Tecumseh became an American hero of independence like John Paul Jones. The myth still exists today. R. David Edmunds points out many Navy cadets still believe it is Tecumseh's statue which stands outside Annapolis ("Tecumseh" 261).

The colonization of Tecumseh's myth, however, cuts two ways. Of course, the co-optation of Tecumseh's life by white Americans satisfies the needs of imperialist self-validation. But the patriotic absorption of Tecumseh is also evidence of his manipulation of white culture.<sup>93</sup> Tecumseh was quick to appropriate European concepts of land

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For a theoretical discussion of ethnohistory and the importance of recognizing the mutual influence of cultural collisions, see James Axtell's The Invasion Within. Pearce, whose Savagism and Civilization continues to be the most important text on the image of the Indian prior to the Civil War, generally treats the Indians as victimized objects. Pearce faults Cooper as a novelist for using the Indian "not for his own sake but for his relationship to the civilized man who was destroying him" (200-210). There are many examples, on the other hand, of Indian orators attempting to manipulate their self image to produce that effect in white minds. See the speeches of Petaleshoro and Red Jacket in

ownership and international law to marshal opposition within Indian culture, as well as to be understood by white settlers (Edmunds Tecumseh 98). Similarly, his brother Tenskwatawa learned how to exploit the power of cult behavior from observing the progress of the Kentucky evangelists in the early 1800s (83). It is not surprising that Tecumseh is viewed an American patriot--his brand of nativism, which countered white racism with Indian racialism, shared enough with his opponent's arguments that his position was understandable, though unacceptable, to his opponents.<sup>94</sup> Heckewelder was horrified that Tecumseh could manipulate the codes of white honor and racism so effectively for his own cause. In Last of the Mohicans, part of the pathos of Magua's character is that his motives are understandable. Although the narrative does not exonerate Magua's malevolence, it does accept white responsibility for the degraded condition of the Indians (11-102).

Richard Slotkin and Roy Harvey Pearce acknowledge readers' sympathy for Magua but discount it quickly. For them, the recognition of Indian virtue only intensifies the drama of extermination: it is merely the momentary "flash of sympathy" as hunters pull the trigger (Slotkin 473). The spirit of the hunter, however, was never universally shared in American culture, as much as it may have motivated land speculation in the Jacksonian

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Buchanan and Stone.

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Edmunds writes in his article, "Tecumseh [...] A Reassessment," Tecumseh's "concepts of political and military unification under a centralized leadership appealed to whites because it was what they would have done. His solution had much less appeal to Native Americans who had little tradition of either centralized leadership or of Pan-Indian confederacies in response to American expansion" (275).

period. As Lucy Maddox point out, sympathy for the Cherokee prompted Emerson to overcome his political reticence and embark on a noteworthy career of abolition oratory. Melville, too, criticized the rhetoric of savagism. While it is important to recognize that white America was responsible for the Indian removals, it is just as important to recognize cultural opposition to those actions. In many ways, The Last of the Mohicans gives voice to arguments against white expansion. Magua's lasting power is the way he invokes these antagonistic strains of debate.

### **Whose Voice?**

The cultural paradoxes Tecumseh embodied are often reflected in Cooper's Native characters, many of whom have an ambiguous relationship to stereotypes of Indian conduct. Cooper demonizes Magua at several points in the narrative, and yet at others, he shifts blame toward the white settlers, who traffic in the same patriotic falsehoods that Magua does. While Magua's words often resonate with the "authentic" language of many Native orators of his day, Cooper also endows his voice with the doctrines of white settlers, who are not only responsible for Magua's depravity, but who are guilty of the same kinds of political intrigues. Cooper's villainous Indians often sound "white." Cooper has been assailed by both whites and Native-Americans for this apparent fault. There are two reasons, however, to withdraw this complaint. First, it simply recirculates retrograde stereotypes about Native discourse. And second, the consequence of perceiving that Cooper's Indians sound nefariously "white" is to acknowledge Cooper's indictment of white culture.

One of the perennial criticisms of the *Leatherstocking Tales* is the argument that

Cooper bleached his Native-American characters. During Cooper's lifetime Lewis Cass led the charge against Cooper's romanticized Indian speech. Although the primary target of Cass's 1828 review of Cooper was to destroy Heckewelder's Indian history, Cass cited a highly figurative speech from The Prairie to complain, "this is not the manner in which Indians talk, nor is it the manner in which any people talk" (374). Cass admitted that Indians use figurative language during ceremonial occasions, but "in ordinary conversation, their language is plain and unornamented, and as free from the labored conceits, as we have quoted, as they themselves are from affectation" (374). Furthermore, Cass was skeptical of any claims about Indian eloquence. He claimed that Tecumseh relied on several speech writers ("Hunter" 99) and that a typical expression of Red Jacket's eloquence was to thump his chest and grunt "Eeh!" (67). Cass was determined to present the American public with images of the ignoble savage, and he objected fiercely to those who attempted to portray Indians in any other way. Cass complained in 1828 that Cooper's Uncas and Hardheart "are civilized men, not Indians [ . . . ] they have the never failing impress of civilization in the dignity of their sentiments, in the whole spirit and conduct of their conversation" (376) <sup>95</sup>

Cooper defended his fidelity to Indian history, and later critics, such as Albert Keiser and John T. Frederick, have supported his claims. However, the question of Native verisimilitude often leads to unfortunately static ideals of human behavior. The insistence

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Other criticisms of Cooper's Indians include Gardiner; "Traits;" Parkman; Wallace, "History;" Hamilton; and Barnett, Ignoble. For defenses based largely on his fidelity to his sources, see Paine; Kaiser; Frederick; Beard; and especially Stockton.

that Cooper's characters speak like real Indians denies Native Americans the agency of manipulating their own language to suit the discursive needs of different occasions. As James Axtell points out, Euro-Native contact resulted in co-influence as well as conquest. Cooper imitated the white historical records of Indian speech and "civilized" the sentiments of many of his Indians, as did many Indians themselves in an attempt to be understood by white listeners.

Cooper's hybrid speeches, part white, part Indian, demonstrate the realities of intercultural contact. They also suggest a potential for intercultural dialogue that his plot apparently resists. It would be easy to dismiss this mixed characteristic of Cooper's speeches as simply ignoble savagism, as Roy Harvey Pearce does, but Cooper's Indian speeches are not wild fantasies of the author (200-10). Many of the speeches in The Last of the Mohicans are closely drawn from Heckewelder's examples of actual intercultural negotiation.

For example, Cooper's apparent source for one of Magua's speeches is Wingenund's speech to Captain Crawford. After a brutal massacre of Moravian Indians on the Sandusky River in 1782, Crawford was captured and sentenced to death by the Indians for his part in the murders. Heckewelder's History records Wingenund's speech to Crawford to demonstrate the challenges of intercultural communication. Wingenund translates a form of Indian justice, which he knows is incomprehensible to Crawford, into a language and a terminology that the European soldier can understand. Wingenund shows sympathy for Crawford's plight (they had been friends) but he is unable to change his tribe's decision. Part of the reason Heckewelder quotes these passages at length is to

demonstrate the logic of Native government and to show the way the Indians attempted to communicate their difference to whites in a language understandable to their opponents

Although the Indian speeches in Cooper's novels are often drawn from real examples, the oratory in Mohicans rarely celebrates understanding, like Cooper's portrayals of white demagoguery. Native oratory seems insufficient to grapple effectively with the civic problems it attempts to resolve. The inadequacy of oratory in Mohicans reflects Cooper's concern that a language for social intercourse, even among whites, was disappearing.

Magua's first speech, occurring at the mount where Cora, Alice, Gamut, and Heyward are about to be slain, satirizes the idea of civic deliberation. Magua has no difficulty building consensus. The slaughter and consumption of the raw deer prior to his speech fairly indicate the intentions of his audience. For the Indians, as for Shylock, the law is clear. Magua, echoing Wingenund, concludes that since his warriors lost a friend at Glenn's, "there is a dark spot on the names of the Hurons, and it must be hid in blood!" (106) Magua repeats this Old Testament stripe-for-a-stripe sentiment, linking the Indians to the lost tribes of Israel, when he exhorts his peers to kill Uncas later in the novel.<sup>96</sup> By accounts of most Indian historians of Cooper's period, Magua's taste for vengeance

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The epigraphs Cooper takes from The Merchant of Venice sustain the popular theory that the Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. Magua's unappeasable thirst for revenge, a trait then believed to dominate Indian psychology, is explicitly connected to Shylock's Jewish culture in the epigraph to Chapter 9: "cursed by my tribe if I forgive him." According to Pearce, the Lost Tribe theory was initially proposed in James Adair's History of the American Indians (1775) and Elias Boudinot's A Star in the West (1816) as a means to protect the Indians from those who would banish them from Western civilization.

instantly validates his Indian credentials and places him beneath the standards of Christian benevolence

The linguistic demonization of Magua occurs on other levels as well. Magua's speech is often rendered indirectly. By summarizing the content of Magua's words, the narrator inevitably speaks for Magua, a form of translation which Eric Cheyfitz has equated with the erasure of the Indians from the community of humankind ("Translation" 88). Magua also excels in the language of reproach. The climax of the speech, translated "literally" for readers, relies on shaming his auditors to action with animalistic epithets

Are the Hurons dogs to bear this? Who shall say to the wife of Menowgua that the fishes have taken his scalp, and that his nation has not taken revenge? [...] The women will point their fingers at us. There is a dark spot on the names of the Hurons, and it must be hid in blood' (106)

Magua's use of "dog" echoes Tecumseh's widely-circulated censure of General Proctor prior to the Battle of the Thames. Tecumseh compared Proctor "to a fat dog, that carries its tail upon its back, but when affrighted, [...] drops it between its legs and runs off" (Vanderwerth 67).<sup>97</sup> Tainted with Tecumseh's martial eloquence, Magua's threats ring with a discomforting bend of nationalism and self-interest.

Magua's unappealing brand of patriotism is further emphasized as the passage

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Tecumseh's September 1813 speech, the translation of which was captured in Proctor's luggage during his flight, was published in the Niles Weekly Register, Nov 6, 1813: 174-5. Although it is not the most representative of Tecumseh's subtlety as a speaker it was one of the most accessible--and authentic--examples of his oratory available in Cooper's day. Prior to the writing of Mohicans, Cooper may also have read Tecumseh's speech to the Osages, as remembered by John Hunter (Buchanan 60-4). Its veracity, however, was attacked by Lewis Cass, among others. See Sugden for a defense of Hunter's account (292-295). Hunter seems to have recorded this speech several years after hearing it, if he heard it at all.

continues. As Cooper makes clear in his letters and his journals, he greatly feared the influence of legislative demagoguery (LJ 2:34, McWilliams Political, 46). Magua's first speech in the novel is calculated to gratify his audience at the expense of their judgment:

[Magua] enumerated the warriors of the party; their several merits, their frequent services to the nations; their wounds, and the number of scalps they had taken. Whenever he alluded to any present (and the subtle Indian neglected none), the dark countenance of the flattered individual gleamed with exultation (11:106).

As Alan Taylor's research on Cooperstown has shown, the Coopers were acutely suspicious of politicians using war stories to curry favor. In particular, Jedidiah Peck earned the contempt of the young novelist, who, as Taylor points out, later ridiculed Peck in The Pioneers. Like Magua, who vacillates between allegiance to the Mohawks and the Hurons, Peck was technically a Federalist but often turned on his own party to win votes. Peck and William Cooper formed a temporary alliance in 1798 which proved beneficial to both of them. When Peck later opposed the Sedition laws, however, the elder Cooper had him arrested, chained, and sent to trial in New York City (262-277). Peck had been a soldier in the Revolutionary army, and attacked William Cooper with the innuendo that he was a monarchist. In return, the Coopers believed Peck was a rabble-rousing demagogue. One of William Cooper's contemporaries described Peck as "a strange, inconsistent, turbulent and I believe unprincipled character. He appears to be neither federal, antifederal, or anything else" (269). Although William Cooper himself often abruptly shifted his own allegiances during the tumultuous politics of the new republic, Fenimore paints his father as a steady gentleman in The Pioneers. In contrast, Peck's character (Hiram Doolittle) is punched, thrown to the ground, and shot in the buttocks (Taylor

289-291) In Mohicans, Magua's cunning self-promotion embodies the worst aspects of the oratorical milieu in which William Cooper participated.

Magua's connection to the evils of white demagoguery is further illustrated as he challenges his peers with a declension from the standards of their forefathers. This trick proves successful, even though his audience is aware of his former disloyalties to the tribe and occasional drunkenness:

What will our fathers think the tribes of the Wyandots have become? They will look on their children with a dark eye, and say, Go! a Chippewa has come hither with the name of a Huron! Brothers, we must not forget the dead, a redskin never ceases to remember [ . . . ] They call to us for aid though our ears are not open, they say, Forget us not. (263)

As Edwin Stockton has noted, Cooper evidently borrowed this passage from Heckewelder's account of the torture of Captain Crawford. The original speech justifies Crawford's murder as specific recompense for the massacre of peaceful Indians, but Magua evokes the memories of an unspecified line of dead brothers and fathers to justify his counsel. Their voices echo through Magua. They demand justice. Readers, however, also hear the voice of an American demagogue exploiting the memory of the Founding Fathers for selfish gain. Cooper is not simply painting Magua's savagery to villainize all Indians--he's criticizing both white and Native conduct.

### **Separate Races, Separate Justice**

Magua's composite voice reaches to the center of the critical debate about Cooper's novel. On one level, the novel has been interpreted as a meditation on the existence of separate "kinds" and separate races (Tompkins). Historicist critics, as well as those who interpret the novel as a romance, have tended to police the boundaries between

races in the novel, arguing that miscegenation was not an option for Cooper.<sup>98</sup> Leslie Fiedler's insistence that the novel uncannily rejects racial amalgamation has been influential in perpetuating discussion about the starkly melodramatic differences among the characters. Even scholars who share little with Fiedler, like Richard Drinnon and Philip Fisher, return to the importance of recognizing the "hard facts" of genocide and racial opposition in the novel. But as Forrest Robinson and Geoffrey Rans point out, The Last of the Mohicans is marked by deep irresolutions and virtually no comment made by any of the characters is allowed to stand uncontested. Mark Patterson puts matters clearly when he asserts that Mohicans is "disputed territory" (96). One of its central battlegrounds is a rhetorical competition over myths of racial purity. The novel perpetually returns to scenes of rhetorical combat and negotiation where identity is pragmatically defined in collisions of words. Unlike Natty and Chingachgook, who collaboratively draw on each other's wisdom, most of the characters remain locked within the racial stereotypes they promote.

Magua's eloquent tyranny underscores the novel's concern with the rhetorical mechanics of leadership and collective identity. His pretense to speak for the group is really a means to gain power. As David Murray has pointed out, this was a common means of discounting Indian rhetoric, even when the speakers emphasized the tribal

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A noteworthy exception is James Wallace's, "Race and Captivity," which investigates the significance of The Wept (1829), a novel which does portray intermarriage. Wallace points out that Cooper may have been influenced by publication of Mary Jamison's Narrative (1824). Cooper grew up near Jemison, a famous example of a white woman who lived richly--and proudly--as an Indian.

consensus behind their words”<sup>99</sup> Cooper’s awareness of the tension between individual self-interest and collective duty, between notions of white justice and Indian justice, in the reception of Indian oratory is highlighted in Magua’s speech on the three types of man.

Although Magua’s speeches generally demonstrate his antagonistic relationship to human community, Cooper complicates Magua’s role as demagogue by allowing him to frame the central question of the novel: is there any language, written or spoken, capable of sustaining a universal principle of justice? Magua’s tragic position is modeled on Milton’s Satan. Magua is able to glimpse the idea of universal justice but he is unable to apply that standard to his own behavior: “Justice! [ . . . ] Is it justice to make evil and then punish for it?” (11. 102). Magua’s notion of justice is thus partially universal in that he blames the whites for what they have done to him, and partially differential in the sense that anything Magua does on behalf of his wronged race is fair.

Faced with tough questions about the commensurability of different languages, cultures, and legal claims, many Natives and Americans in the early national period often sought to defer the problem by invoking a rhetoric of difference. For Natives, a separatist position had its paradoxes (Tecumseh’s Indian confederacy comes to mind), but it seemed a safer alternative than entanglement with the convoluted legalism of white culture. The

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Murray discusses several ways Americans misunderstood the principles of Indian oratory despite their attempt to celebrate and popularize it. In addition to reading Indian addresses an individualistic, rather than collective expressions, they often decontextualized the speeches in such a way that the content became less important than the dramatic act (36-40). On a more basic level, Vanderwerth cites a nineteenth-century account of an Indian treaty speech where the American agents simply pay no attention whatsoever to what is being said (11-12).

removal of the Cherokee from Georgia showed that the white court system could not be trusted. Having proven their ownership in a white court of law, the Cherokee lost their land anyway. In Cooper's novel, Magua's nativist speech to the Lenape concerning racial difference closely resembles the separatist philosophies of several prominent Indian orators of Cooper's day. Magua evokes readers' sympathy for the Indians on one hand, but he establishes an incommensurable system of justice among the races on the other. Describing the separate creation of the Indians and the whites, Magua employs the creationist rhetoric many Indians came to use as a means of distancing themselves from white culture, particularly concerning matters of religion (Dowd 312). Magua identifies three types of men made by the same great Spirit and accords each a separate place and temperament. The blacks are designated to work in the south as slaves. The whites, Magua continues, are designated by the Spirit to

be traders, dogs to their women, and wolves to their slaves. He gave this people the nature of the pigeon: wings that never tire, young, more plentiful than the leaves on the trees, and appetites to devour the earth. He gave them tongues like the false call of the wild-cat; hearts like rabbits; the cunning of the hog (but none of the fox), and arms longer than the legs of the moose. With his tongue he stops the ears of the Indians; his heart teaches him to pay warriors for his battles; his cunning tells him how to get together the goods of the earth; and his arms enclose the land from the shores of the salt-water to the islands of the great lake. His gluttony makes him sick. God gave him enough and yet he wants it all. Such are the pale faces. (29.300-1)

Magua's account is clear. White men have been molded in the ways of greed and vice, and the Indians live in pastoral harmony with nature, not eating more than the land will provide and not fighting to steal each other's lands. Magua summarizes Native history with nostalgia: "They were brave; they were just; they were happy" (29.301). Magua

compliments his listeners by putting the Lenape at the apogee of human creation, but his argument that the Indians live by a separate code of justice is both historically accurate and philosophically troublesome.

One of the sources Cooper seems to have drawn upon for Magua's speech to the Lenape was Petalesharo's address to President Monroe in 1822. Cooper reminds us in Notions that he had personally met Petalesharo and had spent some time with the orator (2:277-88). The speech, available to Cooper during the writing of Mohicans, illustrates Petalesharo's separatist belief that

the Great Spirit made us all--he made my skin red, and yours white; he placed us on earth and intended that we should live differently from each other

He made the whites to cultivate the earth, and feed on domestic animals; but he made us, redskins, to rove through the uncultivated woods and plains, to feed on wild animals; and to dress with their skins. He also intended that we should go to war--to take scalps--steal horses from and triumph over our enemies--cultivate peace at home, and promote the happiness of each other. [...] We worship him, but we worship him not as you do. We differ from you in appearance and manners as well as in our customs, and we differ from you in our religion. (Buchanan 39)

Although less critical of whites than Magua, Petalesharo insists on the incommensurable value systems of whites and Indians. His translators emphasize this point by italicizing his determination to "steal horses" in appropriate circumstances. Highly aware of how his appearance in Washington might be understood, Petalesharo concludes his speech by asking that several tokens of his visit, including a bear claw, be put on display as a record of his visit. They may not mean much to you, he declares, but they will mean much to his descendants who might later see them in Washington. The sentiment of these remarks has a dual effect. On one level, Petalesharo firmly maintains a sense of cultural difference.

The difference, however, is not so great that he completely alienates himself from the culture he is addressing. Petalesharo has found a public language to make these conflicting systems mutually understandable.

Another orator who likely influenced Cooper's exposition of racial separatism was Red Jacket, the famous Seneca politician of New York State. Cooper would have been familiar with Red Jacket through published broadsides and newspaper accounts of his prominent speeches. Red Jacket was also a leading opponent of the lucrative Robert Morris/Holland Land Company sale in upstate New York (1797), a several million acre tract which Cooper's father had unsuccessfully tried to secure during the 1790s when Cooper was a boy (Taylor 114; Stone 237)

Red Jacket, who took the name, Sagoyewata ("he keeps them awake"), is one of the most complex Native-American political figures of the early national period. Guilty of several intrigues against fellow Indians, and often accused of cowardice and heavy drinking, Red Jacket nonetheless distinguished himself among his peers as a persuasive orator. Red Jacket fought against the Americans during the Revolutionary war but was greatly disliked by tribal leaders. Joseph Brant gave him the name of "Cow-Killer" for killing a neighbor's livestock while the owner was at battle. Cornplanter berated Red Jacket for fleeing from the Americans after the battle of Newtown, laying the foundation for a life-long mutual hostility (Stone 124-6). At the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, however, Red Jacket gave a speech advocating inter-tribal unity which impressed both his peers and the Americans. Lafayette, who was also present, admired it so much that he remembered it 40 years later. In 1805, after an inconsistent political record, Red Jacket

developed a unified plan for native separatism that opposed land sales, intermarriage with whites, drinking, English speech, and Christianity<sup>100</sup>

Even though Red Jacket contentiously opposed white encroachment, he occasionally undermined what he said publicly in private negotiation, and took a highly pragmatic strategy advocating Indian rights. His separatist rhetoric earned him respect among the Seneca and it kept whites on the defensive. When he met Lafayette in 1826, he spoke only in Seneca, though he spoke English well. In private, however, Red Jacket acted differently. He enjoyed socializing among whites and attempted to negotiate favorable terms for his people through pragmatic compromise behind closed doors.

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Red Jacket's conversion seems to have been prompted by the introduction of a disagreeable missionary among the Senecas, named Cram. Red Jacket's reply to Cram, composed after two hours of deliberation with his peers, is re-published in the preface of the SUNY Albany edition of Mohicans. The full exchange appears in William Leete Stone's The Life and Times of Red Jacket, 272-9. After their meeting, the Seneca tried to shake hands, but Cram withheld his hand, saying "no fellowship between the religion of God and the devil" (Stone 277). Red Jacket later punned on Cram's name by declaring "Not content with the wrongs the white men had done to this people, they were now seeking to Cram their doctrines down [our] throats" (279). Red Jacket often spoke boldly and contentiously, sometimes earning the censure of his peers for his indiscretion, but his vivacious style comes through nearly all the translations of his speeches. Stone's book, like all his Indian histories, self-consciously includes as many primary records of Indian orations as possible, and is the best anthology of Red Jacket's oratory in existence. As his son declares in the preface to the 1866 edition of The Life and Times of Red Jacket, Stone's hope was that future generations of historians would need facts, not just interpretations. For more on Red Jacket, see J. Nile Hubbard's An Account of Sa-go-ye-wat-Ha, or Red Jacket and His People, 1750-1830 (1886).

Red Jacket's political inconsistencies prior to 1805 were significant. Although his speech at Ft. Stanwix argued that any further treaty negotiations should embrace the Indian tribes as a whole, and that no single tribe should sell land without the approval of all, Red Jacket later did sign over 999-year leases to nearly 6,000, 000 acres of land to American investors in 1788 (Stone 136-7). The price was a \$5000 down payment, and \$500 a year rent.

Significantly, at the height of his separatist phase, Red Jacket sided with the Americans during the War of 1812 even though he was aware of Tecumseh's attempt to enlist Iroquois' support against the Americans

Red Jacket's conduct during the Morris sale, which the Cooper family must have watched carefully, is particularly illustrative of his rhetorical and political styles. Morris had sold the Geneseo tract to investors from Holland. Technically, however, the land still belonged to the Seneca, and Morris was contractually bound to secure title from the Indians before the Dutch investors would pay. At the 1797 meeting Morris organized to obtain this title, The Treaty of Big Tree, he offered 100,000 pounds for their entire tract, allowing a small portion to the Seneca for a reservation. After the initial proposal, Red Jacket declared that the Seneca were unconvinced that they should sell their lands at any price. He declared that although the land was wild, its possession gave great stature to his people

It raises us in our own estimation. It creates in our bosoms a proud feeling which elevates us as a nation. Observe the difference between the estimation in which a Seneca and an Oneida are held. We are courted while the Oneidas are considered a degraded people, fit only to make brooms and baskets. Why this difference? It is because the Senecas are known as the proprietors of a broad domain, while the Oneidas are cooped up in a narrow space. (Stone 240)<sup>101</sup>

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Even in translation, Red Jacket's blunt style is often evident. When Morris's former business associates (Col. Ogden and Miller) later tried to buy the Seneca reservation itself in 1816, Red Jacket replied that President Madison must have been "disordered in his mind when he when he offered to lead us off by arms to the Allegheny reservation" and "should Ogden come down from heaven with life and with flesh on his bones, and to tell us that he had a title for these lands, then we might believe him" (Stone 371-4). By 1827, 26 chiefs met to depose Red Jacket for the contentiousness he brought to negotiations, but even until his death, Red Jacket continued to speak forcefully. After a visit to Washington

Morris refused the Seneca's counter-offer, after which Red Jacket abruptly ended the negotiation by saying "You told us in your first address that even in the event of our not agreeing to sell our lands, we would part as friends. Here then is my hand. I now cover up the council fire" (241). But by Seneca custom, Red Jacket hadn't the authority to end negotiations. Morris bided his time, and eventually convinced the tribes to sell by his initial terms. Angry that his peers had re-opened negotiations, Red Jacket began drinking and stayed away from the council during the day.

According to Morris, however, Red Jacket went to visit him privately at night. Red Jacket told him that he had no objections to selling the land, but it was politically inexpedient for him to say so--he wanted Cornplanter to take all the blame. Red Jacket also refused to sign the treaty, but asked Morris to leave a space for him to sign it later, so that when Washington signed it, he would see Red Jacket's name near his own and understand what an important Seneca leader he was (244-50).

Although Cooper may not have been familiar with the details of Red Jacket's career, Red Jacket's equivocal and intemperate behavior was common knowledge. Red Jacket was a troublesome leader who didn't necessarily mean what he said. Cooper draws on this paradox in The Last of the Mohicans. Natty Bumppo pauses at many points in the novel to insist on the fundamental differences in "natur" of the white and red men. He repeatedly identifies himself as "a man with no cross," which most readers have taken to

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in 1829 to meet Andrew Jackson, he was advertised to give a speech in Albany. Everyone expected would be an Indian panegyric upon the President. Instead, he launched a prolonged anti-Jackson tirade composed of unfavorable juxtapositions of Jackson and Washington (448).

mean a man “of the whole blood of the whites” (8 77). As Richard Slotkin remarks, the phrase also suggests that Natty is no Christian and bears no cross of guilt, even though he occasionally lays claim to white religion (493). In any case, Natty’s claims to purity are inconsistent: he prefers the oral culture of the Indians and yet he claims to be more white than red; he often abjures white civilization for the company of Chingachgook, he lives like an Indian hunter. Although he disdains scalping, he has absorbed many of the habits of an Indian brave. Similarly, Chingachgook insists on the “unmixed blood” of Indian chiefs in his own veins but eventually becomes a drunken Christian convert. During his last moments in the Pioneers, he starts singing a Delaware death song. Both these protagonists’ claims to a “separate” race are confusing.

The “transformation” of the Lenape into women at the hands of the Iroquois is another example of Cooper’s interest in the relationship of identity to public rhetoric.<sup>102</sup> Beside serving as one of the novel’s few attempts at humor, the myth explains the great hostility Uncas and Chingachgook have for the Iroquois. According to the Lenape story, when they agreed to broker peace between the Iroquois and the Dutch, their generosity was turned to a reproach. In Mohicans, Uncas and Chingachgook have to bear Magua’s teasing about wearing women’s “petticoats” (24.247). The feminization myth is important

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Robert Clark’s History and Myth in American Fiction argues that Cooper suppressed the real history of the Delaware and Iroquois, and substituted the feminization myth to validate his writing and his family’s land claims. Clark’s reading is persuasive in biographical terms but it does not explain other consequences the myth produces in the fiction. As Stockton argues at length, Heckewelder never claimed the myth was historical fact; it was a traditional story. And as a story, it provides an intriguing framework for the understanding transformational effects of rhetoric in Cooper’s novel.

because it illustrates the way in which identity was portrayed in Native myth as a rhetorical construct. As Heckewelder tells it, the story is a classic example of the high art of Indian politics, which valued the hermeneutic ingenuity of both speaker and auditor. In his chapter on Indian politics, Heckewelder reports that tribes often sent complex messages to each other as a matter of literary and political pride. In terms of the feminization story, the Iroquois proved craftier poets than the Delaware. Jane Tompkins is correct to point out that Cooper's novel is a mediation on "kinds," but the hermeneutic tradition from which it comes has strongly Native origins, rather than western ones.

As Kenneth Burke has observed, rhetoric can take place in antagonistic or amorous modes. Uncas and Chingachgook speak to the Iroquois as enemies; they speak to Natty in the rhetoric of courtship. In the section where Natty, Chingachgook, and Uncas decide whether to chase Magua by land or by water, their ability to negotiate sets the heroes apart from their peers. As Stephen Blakemore has pointed out, Natty is persuasive only when he sheds the "cold and artificial manner which characterizes all classes of Anglo-Americans" and dons the physical and metaphoric eloquence of an Indian. The bond generated between these men through rhetoric is an explicit and optimistic commentary on national destiny and the limitations of racial separatism:

In short, Uncas and his father became converts to his way of thinking, abandoning their own previously expressed opinions with a liberality and a candor that, had they been the representatives of some great and civilized people, would have infallibly worked their political ruin, by destroying, forever, their reputation for consistency. (19, 199)

Although Natty's "white" reason prevails, it would be a mistake to discount

Chingachgook and Uncas's conversion as an abandonment of Indian principle. Without

the service of sophisticated Indian rhetoric or a non- "civilized" code of argumentative conduct, there would be little chance for consensus. Both Indian and white cultures mutually contribute their talents to this decision. At the end of the novel, when the final reckoning between cultures takes place, however, the grandfatherly representative of public justice, Tamenund, is barely able to perform the task required of him.

### **From the Ruins of Logan**

Tamenund is a crucial, and importantly flawed figure in Cooper's novel. The responsibility of weighing the opposing rights of Magua and Heyward falls on his shoulders. Cooper looks to him as the final authority of disinterested justice, a figure whose difficult job is to determine the merits of the white and Native claims. The struggle is not just over the prisoners; it's a struggle for the rights to claim the American soil. On one hand, Cooper is irresistibly drawn to locate a principle of justice in this novel, and on the other, he lets Tamenund fail, apparently destroying entirely the potential for a republican solution. The voice of unified, disinterested virtue collapses in the face of the incommensurable claims of modern society. The collapse is strategic, however. Tamenund stands for a principle of justice Cooper endorses, but Cooper simultaneously recognizes the shortcomings of a single, monological voice of authority. Rather, Cooper displaces Tamenund's moral voice into the narrative itself, reflecting it in the evidence of collaboration, such as the partnership of Natty and Chingachgook. Cooper retains the voice of republican virtue, but not the patriarch.

Cooper casts suspicion on Tamenund's role as senior legislator of the Lenape tribe even before the chieftain makes an appearance. The village waits anxiously for his verdict

on the prisoners but "the aged warrior whose privilege it was to speak, was silent, seemingly oppressed with the magnitude of his subject. The delay had already continued long beyond the usual deliberative pause that always precedes a conference" (28-292). Later, Cooper informs readers that the tribe is accustomed to hearing him talk unintelligibly to himself and that he sometimes has to be reminded of the subject at hand (30-308). Cora makes an extended plea for her sister based on an act of generosity once extended by Munro to a Lenape warrior but Tamenund is unable to remember what she is talking about. Instead of responding to her questions, he mutters about the cyclical rise and fall of nations. For all his native dignity, Tamenund can barely recognize what is going on around him.

Even more than Uncas, the last of the Mohicans, Tamenund's damaged grandeur represents the fate of the Lenape nation itself. As William Kelly points out, Tamenund's comments on the cyclical course of empire explicitly evoke the cult of Gibbon and Volney (64, 75-7). Following a neo-romantic aesthetic generally reserved for the appreciation of architecture and landscape, Cooper uses the fragments of Tamenund's broken poetry as occasion to indulge in the appreciation of a power whose former sublimity seems all the more glorious because it has to be imagined (Ringe 133-8).<sup>103</sup> In this regard, Cooper's

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Murray is explicit about the pernicious effects of the aestheticization of the fragments of Indian oratory: "One of the effects of seeing Indian speeches as fragment, as expressions of something more than themselves, is to draw attention away from the actual details of the speech's transmission and of its political implications and there is certainly an irony in the use of the speaking and the self-representing Indian to represent something else entirely, to act as synecdoche for what is inexpressible within white culture. The point of communication thus comes to represent its opposite, by concentrating on the speech as moment rather than part of a dialogue; by making it into tableau rather than process" (44).

dramatization of Tamenund closely resembles the myth of Logan, whose pathos-ridden final testament was widely broadcast as the finest example of Indian oratory ever recorded. After the murder of his wife and children, Logan supposedly declared,

There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called upon me for revenge. I have sought it; I have killed many; I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country I rejoice at the beams of peace. But I do not harbor a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn Logan? No one. (Sandefur 291)

The fatalistic melancholy of Logan's speech presides over The Last of the Mohicans like a cloud.<sup>104</sup> As Eric Seeber has carefully documented, the origins of Logan's speech are dubious. Its Biblical overtones suggest it was created in part, if not wholly, by Logan's Anglo-translators, if indeed, he ever spoke anything resembling this speech at all. While the creation of Logan's speech is arguably imperialist, it is also a record of the rhetoric generated by two cultures in collision. Despite its suspicious origins, Logan's speech nonetheless set the paradigm for many "authentic" speeches given by defeated chieftains during the nineteenth century, such as Black Hawk, Seattle, and Chief Joseph (Vanderwerth). In these speeches, we hear resonances of both Indian and white presence. Logan's speech is a document of struggle. Tamenund's resignation in the concluding lines of Cooper's novel is an unfortunately accurate declaration of a sentiment current in both Native and white discourse: "Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the redman has not yet come again. My day has been too long"

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Cooper is simultaneously guilty of exploiting Indian speech in Murray's terms and criticizing the white role in creating those stereotypes.

<sup>104</sup> For studies of the veracity of Logan's speech see Sandefur and Seeber.

(33 350)

Despite his fatalism, Tamenund speaks for a principle of staid integrity that Cooper associated with the highest attainments of political life. His closed eyes, which suggest his withdrawal from present realities, also signify the disinterested judgment he has formed by "having so long witnessed the selfish workings of the human passions" (28 294). As John McWilliams has noted, Cooper's mid-life heroes, Washington, Lafayette and John Jay, appear in his travel writing as "principled gentleman in retirement, not in action" (Political 42). For Cooper, the ideal disinterested gentleman was a man "like John Jay, of 'moderation, dignity, and firmness' so principled that he can seem, at times, stiffly dispassionate" (42). Tamenund's similarity to these men is also illustrated by Cooper's description of Tamenund's robes, ("rich and imposing, though strictly after the simple fashions of his tribe") which recall Cooper's admiring description of Jefferson in the "simple robes of Sully" (28 293, LJ 1 95). Similarly, in Notions of the Americans Cooper describes the silence following Lafayette's address to the House of Representatives with a coda that could well apply to the fragmentary outbursts of Tamenund:

A deeper silence never pervaded any assembly than that with which the audience listened to his answer. There was so much of nature, of sincerity, and of affection in the manner of the speaker, and quite evidently so little preparation in the language of his reply, that it produced a vastly greater effect than any studied discourse, however elegant in phraseology and thought. (2.144)

Cooper admires Lafayette's speech for its emotional effect on the audience, not its political import. In the end, Tamenund's political inefficacy is tied to Cooper's belief that republican virtue has to do more with personal integrity than with action. When Magua

asks for judgement. Tamenund replies with reluctant brevity: "Justice is the law of the great Manitou. My children, give the stranger food. Then Huron, take thine own and depart." (29-302) Tamenund does not let the emotional pleas of Cora or his apparent personal distrust of Magua cloud his obligation to keep peace with the Hurons.

Unlike Munro, Webb, and Montcalm, who don't respect their own promises and obligations, Tamenund functions as a figure of poetic respect rather than a political strategist. But Tamenund's blunt solution simply ignores the competing claims that novel presents. The judge makes no attempt to decide Magua's right to his captive in the first place. Although Tamenund is not guilty of the hypocrisy of the other political figures in the novel, the sense of justice he invokes is purely rhetorical--because the case before him is so complicated, his resolution seems like a failure of will rather than a sublime invocation of principle.

The apparent failure of Tamenund's oratory illustrates Cooper's investment in a different type of public rhetoric. Robert Clark has pointed out that Cooper never tired of representing the shortcomings of the oratorical demagogue. Instead, Cooper offers the novel "as an inherently rational and democratic form, one that speaks from one man to another, that allows close examination of its arguments and that demands thought in production and reception" (James 12). Clark concludes that by doing so, Cooper "practices his own deceptions on the credulity of his readers," and thereby reintroduces a sophisticated type of public rhetoric through the back door. This is a provocative way to approach Mohicans, and it enables us to sustain Cooper's critiques of oratorical rhetoric at the same time that we acknowledge its powerful role in Cooper's drama. Rather than

rejecting public speech entirely. Cooper is encouraging his audience to listen to a different strain of that discourse. Even Magua's speeches point out the limitations of rigid separatism and reveal manifestations of the intercultural rhetoric Natty and Chingachgook practice. The elegiac monodies spoken at the end of the novel--the funeral for Uncas and Cora--capture both the inefficacy of words to heal the wounds of the war and the tragic sense that the words are all there are left. While Mohicans has been criticized for prophesying the doom of both the Lenape and Iroquois, the concluding words of the novel hold the distant possibility of redemption and a rebirth of public justice--"the time of the red men has not yet come again."

Indeed, Cooper was unable to let Tamenund die. Cooper resurrected him in the form of Susquesus in the Littlepage manuscripts. After Hugh Littlepage's oratory has failed to disperse the anti-renters in The Redskins, Cooper concludes the novel with Susquesus, as old "as Tamenund," who speaks for several pages condemning the actions of the fake Injins. In this strident novel one is tempted to fault Cooper for his lack of artistry. Susquesus' advice to the Injins include such wooden phrases as "When you make a law, you keep it [...] This is my counsel: do what is right" (712). But Susquesus is one of the few characters who actually tries to negotiate the various claims of the black, white, and Native peoples around him. Although we might applaud Cooper if he had put Susquesus on the path west with his peers, we might ourselves fall prey to the fallacies of racial separatism Cooper lays bare in Mohicans.

Susquesus, like Tamenund before him, underscores Cooper's attempt to forge a common tradition of justice which all Americans can respect. Neither Susquesus nor

Tamenund singularly represent the voice Cooper is constructing--rather they are parts of it. Like Natty, who adopts Native postures to communicate with Uncas and Chingachgook, Cooper's narrative voice is hybrid. Like Judge Temple's house in The Pioneers, hosting a patchwork of competing architectures and guests, Cooper's voice is both pluralistic and republican.

Although Tamenund's resignation in the concluding lines of The Last of the Mohicans is an accurately pessimistic declaration of sentiments then current in both Native and white discourse, it leaves the future open. The removal and disintegration of Native tribes at the hands of the U.S. government is a matter of record. I would submit that Cooper's achievement in Mohicans is a record the mutual influence of these cultures on each other, respecting their differences, but also an attempt to forge a discourse that they can share.

## Chapter 5

### “To Do What’s Right”: Frederick Douglass’s Collective Individualism

Today, Frederick Douglass is better known as a writer than as a speaker. Although Douglass was more famous during the nineteenth century as an orator, most modern literary scholars refer to his speaking career--the heart of his literary output--with only passing interest.<sup>105</sup> Rather, the explosion of modern Douglass scholarship has focused on his autobiographies. Our current understanding of Frederick Douglass’s literary accomplishment has been greatly shaped by these critical assumptions. For example, scholars such as Robert Stepto, Eric Sundquist and William Andrews have all devalued Douglass’s oratory in order to emphasize the genius of Douglass’s writing. Stepto, writing on “The Heroic Slave,” finds much to admire about the text once he dismisses the “florid soliloquies which unfortunately besmirch this and too many other anti-slavery writings” (111). Although Eric Sundquist asserts that the rhetorical influence of Douglass’s oratory is “everywhere evident in the written texts,” he concludes that Douglass’s autobiographies are of “greater literary interest” than his oratory (Frederick 6-11).<sup>106</sup> Finally, in his survey of modern Douglass scholarship, William Andrews applauds the move away from the idea that Douglass was an orator (Critical 2-7).

Although these assessments are made in the spirit of broadening the canon of

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In contrast, literary historians like David Blight, Waldo Martin and William McFeely have made important use of Douglass’s speeches. For rhetorical treatments of Douglass’s oratory, see Fulkerson, Kinney, and Lucas.

<sup>106</sup>

Eric Sundquist’s To Wake the Nations, with its consideration of “The Heroic Slave,” takes Douglass’s oratory far more seriously.

nineteenth-century American studies to include Douglass's Narrative alongside The Scarlet Letter, their foreclosure on Douglass's verbal expertise obscures important aspects of Douglass's work. In the case of Stepto's analysis of "The Heroic Slave," it conceals what Douglass believed was his own greatest talent, his power to persuade people to acknowledge the inhumanity of slavery. Similarly, William Andrews's study of voice in "The Heroic Slave" examines the narrative voice of the novella's white narrators and skirts the issue of Madison Washington's voice entirely--a voice which forms the heart of both Douglass's fiction and his real-life career. Washington's eloquence in "The Heroic Slave" is a clear illustration of what many abolitionists believed was the most effective tool in converting people to anti-slavery beliefs.

The critical reluctance to study Douglass's oratory also confronts another important fact: Douglass's speeches were very popular. He spoke to huge audiences, black and white, men and women. They sometimes paid money for the privilege. His popularity was not based on the fact that what he was saying was bitter medicine. It was because his cause was important, and most of all, his style was hugely entertaining. While scholars have noted the appeal of Douglass's powerful ironic voice and his sexual magnetism, the specific strategies of his speaking style have not been examined.

One of Douglass's frequent claims during his growth as an independent speaker was his refrain that he had little "new" to say:

I do not hope to be able, in the few remarks I have to make, to say anything new or eloquent, if indeed, anything new were needed, for it will be time enough to discuss new truths when old ones shall have been

recognized and adopted. (5/9/48. FDP 2:118)<sup>107</sup>

One of the “old” truths Douglass sought to convey was that a “MAN IS A MAN” (118) and that no one had the right to treat another human being as an object. Another one of the “old” truths was a caveat against hypocrisy. It was wrong to grant liberty to some and deny it to others (118). Douglass’s development of these ideas in an oral, public context is central to both the shape and content of his speech and writing. Douglass believed he could transform a public meeting “into a single individuality,” a shared consciousness of the evil of slavery (LT 217). Public performance gave Douglass the opportunity to manipulate people’s sense of shame and virtue. To a large extent, the success of Douglass’s literary techniques is based on a complex series of assumptions about individual duty toward the human collective which is often glossed simply as his communitarian ethos. Douglass’s manipulation of this rhetoric--the rhetoric of old truths--forms the core of his literary genius.

The central themes and practices of Douglass’s oratory provide alternative interpretations of the present liberal theorization of his literacy, that literacy is an instrumental technique practiced by individuals to advance their own prestige or economic condition.<sup>108</sup> While Douglass often spoke on behalf of the liberal rights of the individual, usually for the economic self-improvement of the poor, he has often been branded as a

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I use the following abbreviations for the major Douglass collections: FDP Frederick Douglass Papers, 1979; N The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, 1841; BF My Bondage and My Freedom, 1955; LT The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, 1881

<sup>108</sup>

For less pessimistic definitions of Frederick Douglass’s literacy, see Royer’s discussion of literacy and community.

consummate “liberal individualist” in a pejorative sense. Many readers of Douglass’s writing argue that Douglass’s literacy alienated him from identification with other African Americans, and that Douglass participated in the subordination and exploitation of women while telling his story. Others have argued that Douglass’s literacy is a partial appropriation of the violence of his masters, and that his storytelling identifies him as a species of nineteenth-century homo economicus or “heroic individual,” critical of, but “energized” by the modes of economic exploitation that surrounded him.<sup>109</sup>

An examination of Douglass’s oratorical career forces us to reconsider, if not withdraw, these complaints. As Gregory Jay has asserted, Douglass’s use of oratory challenges aesthetic theories based on the concept of the private, written text (213). For Douglass, public speaking was a moral act founded on the priority of human community over individual desire. Although Douglass often spoke on behalf of individual liberal rights with his popular and deceptively titled lecture, “Self-Made Men,” he consistently deplored self-interest and the domination of the strong over the weak. The power of Douglass’s performances are based on an assumed agreement with his audience, and hence, one seldom articulated, over the principles of communal obligation and moral duty. A study of the communal ethos of Douglass’s oratory allows us a new way of approaching both his speech and writing.

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For studies that show Douglass’ alienation from his race, see Walker 247; Baker Journey 38-9; Leverenz 361; Martin, Mind 208-210. For his exploitation of women see, Franchot 154; McDowell 202. For his relationship to the discourse of his former masters, see Ziolkowsky 151-2; Cheyfitz, Poetics 33, 127-35. For his identification with white, liberal culture, see Bercovitch, “Problem” 648; Baker, Blues 48; Martin 253-78; Leverenz 341-370; Moses 69; Yarborough 174-183; Zafar 99-117.

### The Rhetoric of Douglass's Stage Technique

One of the early influences on Douglass's educational development was Caleb Bingham's The Columbian Orator (1797). Douglass's prominent endorsement of Orator in his autobiography is a complicated gesture. In response to rumors that he was an educated freeman masquerading as a runaway slave, Douglass initially referred to the book in his Narrative to explain the source of his literacy.<sup>110</sup> His expansion of the passage in succeeding editions of his autobiographies was also an homage to the literary conventions of bildung.<sup>111</sup> But Douglass's reference to The Columbian Orator also exerts a far less esoteric affect on his readers--most of Douglass's audience had studied Bingham's anthology, too. Even in the South during the early 1830s, where one would expect The Columbian Orator's strongly anti-slavery message to restrict its availability, Douglass was able to purchase a copy of it.<sup>112</sup> Douglass refers to the text as a means of identifying with

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Douglass's anxiety about dispelling these rumors is evident in his December 11, 1845 speech in Belfast (Blassingame 87-89). Concerning his literacy itself, many critics have explored the problem of Douglass's use of a white literary tradition to express black identity. Houston Baker, denigrating Douglass's Narrative as a "white form," laments that "had there been a separate, written black language available Douglass might have fared better" (38-39). Ziolkowski compares the violent passages in the Narrative to Douglass's acquisition of literacy. Royer, though acknowledging the drawbacks of Douglass's literacy, also discusses Douglass's literacy as a process of forging new communities.

<sup>111</sup>

See the introduction to Andrews' Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass for a survey of the bildung trope in Douglass criticism (4-11).

<sup>112</sup>

Until just prior to the Civil War, New England educators dominated the publishing market and southerners hadn't much choice but to buy their books (Elson 7-8). For southern protest about this, see Morgan, "Our School Books." De Bow's Review 28

his audience

The Columbian Orator has been discussed by many scholars but none have drawn attention to the way its divisive rhetoric supported communitarian goals.<sup>113</sup> The Orator's portraits of rebellious and conscientious protest and its emphasis on moral rather than economic liberty are all aimed toward the creation of a linguistic New Jerusalem. American society could be renovated and cleansed through the agency of moral debate. Endorsing the principled beliefs of Indians, Asians, and blacks, Bingham's Orator promoted the spoken word as a means of fusing tolerant democratic politics to the strict demands of Calvinist moral principle. The Orator presented dialogues and conscientious oratory as the primary means of binding the many creeds and races of the modern nation into one society. But rather than adopting a rhetoric of compromise, the Orator championed a language of defiant and stoic moral opposition, and this proved a complex and lasting influence on Douglass.<sup>114</sup>

As both Henry Louis Gates and John Blassingame have suggested, Douglass probably acquired his stylistic affinity for antithesis from his close study of Bingham's

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(1860) 434-440.

<sup>113</sup>

See Stone 17-18; Blassingame xxii-xxiii; Baker, Journey 38-9; Ziolkowski 162-3; Fishkin/Peterson; Andrews, "Preacher" 592.

<sup>114</sup>

Takaki's discussion of Douglass's conflicted relationship to physical violence provides a good explanation of why Douglass came to see literacy as a means of waging a principled war against slavery. Sundquist, in his To Wake the Nations, also discusses how Douglass's literacy, showcased in a text like "The Heroic Slave," "need not be simply a new form of enslavement" and could be used successfully as an oppositional tool against his former masters. "Frantz Fanon to the contrary" (105).

anthology<sup>115</sup> Douglass's facility with various forms of rhetorical opposition--with contrasting words or images, sentence and narrative structure, and even with irony and double-voicing--is well documented.<sup>116</sup> But a writer's use of antithesis is usually understood as a decorative technique. It makes language attractive but it doesn't necessarily change the meaning. In the realm of deliberative oratory, however, where a course of action is being chosen, or where a defendant is judged guilty or not guilty, the object of debate is to separate a problem into clearly opposed positions. Douglass drew attention to the necessity of taking a clear position on social issues in his 1854 speech on ethnology:

Here a man must be hot, or be accounted cold, or, perchance, something worse than hot or cold. The lukewarm and the cowardly will be rejected by earnest men on both sides of the controversy. The cunning man who avoids it to gain the favor of both parties will be rewarded with scorn and the timid man who shrinks from it, for fear of offending either party, will be despised. To the lawyer, the preacher, the politician, and to the man of letters, there is no neutral ground. (7/12/54, FDP 2:500)

Probably referring to the tangled debates over Kansas-Nebraska issue, Douglass sought to make the distinction between pro-slavery and anti-slavery clear and absolute. Hence his use of antithesis is more than a rhetorical decoration--it composes both the structure and syntax of Douglass's oratory.

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Antithesis is a general trope of opposition or contrast, applying to either structure or content, but a familiar example is Douglass's famous phrase, "You have seen how a man was made a slave, you will now see how a slave was made a man" (Narrative 294). See Gates (267n) and Blassingame (xxii).

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For sentence structure, see A. Stone; with contrasting words or images Fishkin/Peterson; narrative structure Gates, and irony and double-voicing, Redding, Andrews, Critical Essays.

Douglass may have learned antithesis from the Orator, but the selections he doesn't mention in his autobiographies are as important as those he does. In his own career, Douglass seems to have been greatly influenced by the Orator's passages from Cato, Socrates, and John Muir, all of which contrast the righteousness of the speaker against the corruption of his opponents. As I have shown in Chapter Two, Cato's speech, one of the few selections from the Orator Douglass borrows from in his own speeches, uses antithesis as both a literary trope and an argumentative motif.<sup>117</sup> Cato complains that "we have lost the right names of things" when stealing is called "liberality," and "audaciousness in perpetrating crimes, courage" (Bingham, Columbian 48-9). What functions as a trope in Cato's discourse, the structural opposition of words or ideas, also describes the contrast of Cato's stoic integrity with Caesar's intrigue.

Similarly, Douglass's early rhetoric was devoted to unmasking the euphemisms of slavery by offering himself, as a thinking and speaking creature, as the living antithesis of a racial stereotype. He was, as Garrison had prompted him to represent himself, an example of "chattel now a man" (FDP 1:28). In all his speeches Douglass declared this equality with both argument and performance. In one instance, announced it with the bold words "I'm your blood kin. You don't get rid of me so easily. I mean to hold on to you" (5/6/45; 1:33). In these three sentences, Douglass cleaves to his auditors, minimizing the effect of their agency and affirming his own.

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For evidence of Douglass's familiarity with the Cato selection from Bingham's Orator, see Douglass's response to the Boston anti-abolition rioters on Dec. 9, 1860 (Holland 282). In another instance Douglass adopts Cato's famous complaint, "there must be no calling things by their right names" (1/14/62; FDP 3:477).

Douglass's skill at extemporaneous speech also helped to validate his claims to equality. This facet of his presentation, usually manifested in his quick responses to hecklers in the crowd, excited his audience. He answered questions with a skill and candor that astonished news reporters during his first English tour. Later, in the United States, Douglass claimed to prefer rowdy struggle with the audience to formal speech-making: "I like the wild disorder of our free-discussion meetings. I like to hear the earnest voice of Anti-Slavery, so far forgetting the character of its speech, and manner of its delivery, that almost any person may take exceptions to the remarks made" (5/9/49, 2:180). Douglass's skill at repartee proved no one had ghostwritten his speeches. At a speech in New York City, when Captain Isaiah Rynders attempted to throw him from the stage, Douglass asked, "am I not a man?" Rynders replied, "You are not a black man; you are only half a nigger." Douglass quickly responded, "He is correct; I am indeed, only half a negro, a half brother to Mr. Rynders" (10/14/50, 2:238-239). Douglass's fast wit was itself a powerful criticism of slavery.

Douglass's verbal expertise allowed him to invert the roles usually cast for black speakers. He not only persuaded auditors of the validity of his case; he declared it. One of Douglass's favorite set-piece speeches in the late 1840s was an excerpt from John Philpot Curran's 1794 speech on behalf of Irish nationalism (which Stowe would later include in a chapter epigraph in Uncle Tom's Cabin). During his lectures, Douglass would often say,

I speak in the spirit of the British law which makes liberty commensurate with, and inseparable from British soil; which proclaims even to the stranger and the sojourner, the moment he sets his foot on British earth, that the ground upon which he treads is holy, and consecrated by the spirit of universal emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have

been pronounced.--no matter in what complexion incompatible with freedom an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon him.--no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down--no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery: the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the God sink together in the dust: his soul walks abroad in her own majesty--his body swells beyond the measure of his chains that burst from around him, and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation. (1:85)

Here, Douglass performs what he claims to describe. He is not arguing, nor is he merely describing the benefits of British law--his apostrophe to emancipation is a spectacle of that liberty. Douglass performs as a man once "devoted on the altar of slavery" and his articulation of Curran's words is the living enactment of their import. Douglass uses language to accomplish what his countrymen refuse to legislate.

Douglass was also a master of satire and irony. In the age of American melodrama, a speaker had to be entertaining. Douglass's apostrophe to the ships in his Narrative reflects the expectations of his audience to hear a dramatic soliloquy, such as those Edwin Forrest gave in Metamora.<sup>118</sup> And in a period when abolition speakers competed for public attendance with popular melodrama, minstrel shows, lyceum lectures, and musical performances, Douglass used his exceptional talents for dramatic mimicry as one of his central assets.<sup>119</sup>

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See Jeffery Mason's Melodrama and the Myth of America for a study of the political valences of melodrama. Mason argues that the sentimental appeal of melodrama tended to "bolster the interests of the middle and upper classes" (13). While I agree largely with Mason, melodramatic sentiment was not always a conservative, middle class force. For more on the oppositional aspects of nineteenth-century theater and its complicated political significance, see Bousquet.

<sup>119</sup>

In his study of Douglass's life in Maryland, Dickson Preston observes that Douglass was

In stark contrast to his Narrative, whose success was based in supplication, pathos, and controlled indignation, Douglass's early successes on the lecture circuit were based on bold satire. One young auditor of Douglass's 1842 speech at Lanesborough, Massachusetts remembered hearing Douglass because he "made us laugh some" by illustrating the hypocrisy of the Christian slave holders (Alford 87). And as Douglass's scramble with Captain Isaiah Rynders demonstrates, Douglass used humor to win over his audience even when he was threatened with bodily harm by rioters.

Douglass's early notoriety was largely based in his imitations of pro-slavery ministers and advocates of Colonization. Douglass even mocked fellow black speakers for their lack of education. Criticizing black pro-Colonization ministers, Douglass impersonated them--in a burlesque of minstrelsy--by imitating their voices. "I take my text from de Rebelations ob St John. John you know was cast away on de island of Patmos" (57-49, FDP 2:167). Douglass then shifted back to his own commanding voice with the assertion that if these were the kinds of ministers being sent to Africa, they had better be "instructed and improved" before they were sent.

Douglass's most famous performance was his imitation of a white preacher on the theme of "Servants, Obey Your Masters." This satire was a central part of Douglass's speaking repertoire from his very first months as a Garrisonian abolition lecturer (FDP 1:12). He claimed to have modeled his text on an edition of sermons for slave holders initially published in 1743 by Thomas Bacon, which was later edited and republished in Virginia in 1813 and 1836 by Bishop William Meade (9/24/47; FDP 1:97). Douglass

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very well liked for his skills as a mimic.

buttoned his coat up to his neck, put on a stern countenance and imitated the canting voice of a hypocritical preacher (1 360). According to the journal of a Lanesborough seminary student, Douglass's performance was hilarious (Alford). In his satire, Douglass usually gave a several paragraph sermon, saying that slaves should be happy because 1) the Lord has commanded them to obey, 2) happiness is dependent on obedience, 3) they should obey their masters out of gratitude from being taken from pagan Africa, 4) their strong physique indicates an undeveloped intellect. After his performance, Douglass concluded that it was appalling that such "miserable twaddle" should be "palmed off on the poor slave as the gospel of Jesus Christ" (1 361). Although the sermons in the texts Douglass imitated are accompanied by anti-slavery songs, and Bacon's sermons themselves don't quite condone slavery in the way Douglass alleges, Douglass would flaunt the text before the crowd as if it were the devil's own book.

The humor of Douglass's slaveholder's sermon was one of the most effective weapons in his anti-slavery arsenal. By entertaining his audience, he guaranteed their return and he also earned their respect. Most importantly, however, by obliging his audience to laugh at the amorality of slave holding doctrine, Douglass divided the unregenerate from the elect and gathered the righteous into a reinvigorated Christian family. Since Douglass was addressing a group, even those who disagreed with him were obliged to laugh, and forced, if only superficially, to suspend their beliefs by smiling along with the majority. Such public ridicule of slavery enabled Douglass to manipulate a form of public shame from which readers are largely exempt.

Furthermore, Douglass's satire of Christian obedience promoted an active piety.

The boldness of his effort suggests that either Douglass seriously misjudged the sentiments of his audience or that they shared with them a more active notion of Christian worship than is sometimes associated with nineteenth-century piety. Douglass's ideal of Christian conduct, like many others of his generation exposed to Methodist and Calvinist evangelism, was rooted in earthly "obedience" to God, but not to man. Douglass's belief in the radical application of Christian doctrine is an important source of his intellectual heritage.

### **Self-Made Men and the Limits of Liberal Individualism**

Douglass's demonstration of the church's complicity with slavery is one of the most bitter lessons he had to preach to the American population in his early autobiographies. As Douglass repeats at the end of his Narrative, his attack on corporate American religion is not an indictment of Christianity itself, but rather an attack on the "the woman-whipping, the mind-darkening, the soul-destroying religion" of Christian slave holders. Douglass points out there is another kind of worship, "that religion that comes from above," in the "wisdom of God, which is pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits without impartiality and without hypocrisy" (5/22/46; 2.282-3). Although Douglass's tributes to Christianity are fewer and less passionate than his denunciations of Christian hypocrisy, his rhetoric is never far from the communitarian assumptions of Calvinist and evangelical preaching. As a public speaker, Douglass's consistent theme was to forge a moral community, not a community of self-oriented entrepreneurs.

Recent Douglass scholarship has sought to identify Douglass as a liberal

individualist Douglass's popular speech, "Self-Made Men," which he first delivered in early 1859 and repeated for 35 years afterward, is generally cited as the marker of Douglass's affiliation with laissez-faire individualism.<sup>120</sup> In this speech and in many passages in his later writing, particularly at the conclusion of Life and Times, Douglass claims that individuals are responsible for their own improvement and perfection. They can not look to their friends, their institutions, or their gods; they must look to themselves. In the words of Donald Gibson, this position is that "the individual is pretty much on his own and is responsible ultimately for the nature and character of his existence" (601). Gibson apologizes for Douglass's use of individualist discourse by concluding he could not have "spoken any language other than the dominant discourse and expect to be heard" in the context of laissez-faire capitalism (602). While Gibson emphasizes the Biblical origins of Douglass's individualism, he establishes Douglass's religious faith only to show how Douglass abandons it after his fight with Covey. By subordinating the role of faith in Douglass's later life, Gibson's definition of individuality ignores a crucial nineteenth-century distinction between individual responsibility and individual rights.

The difference between responsibility and right hinges on the definition of liberty, which, as Jonathan Edwards pointed out, can take two forms, moral liberty and natural liberty. Natural liberty is a state of doing whatever people please. This is the modern conception of liberty, and what Americans generally believe Jefferson meant by the phrase "liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence. But as Garry

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See Martin 253-78; Bercovitch, "Problem" 648; Rites 19-20; Leverenz 361; Gibson 597; Blight 178, 203.

Wills has argued, eighteenth-century ideals of natural liberty were also tempered by the communitarian ideals of liberty defined by the Scottish Common Sense philosophers (Declaring). Natural liberty can be restrictive because it allows people to become slaves to passion; natural liberty can be slavery. Douglass is quite clear on this point when he describes the slave saturnalias at Christmas in his autobiographies. The freedom to get drunk, or the freedom to act licentiously, is no freedom at all. Moral liberty, however, is the freedom to do what is right, to act in accordance with one's understanding (Edwards, Freedom, Heimert 108-110; 312). Moral liberty is the mechanism through which people manifest their benevolence and respect for each other. As Lyman Beecher asserted in his sermons, "The Bible a Code of Laws" and "The Faith Once Delivered to the Saints," liberty was faith in God, not "natural" freedom (Auto 553-63). Douglass would have been aware of this distinction through his study of The Columbian Orator, as well as through his experience as a preacher in the African Methodist Church of Zion. In My Bondage and Freedom, Douglass explicitly refers to the theological definition of liberty when he tells us of the lesson he learned from Uncle Lawson: "'If you want liberty,' said the good old man, 'ask the Lord for it in faith and HE WILL GIVE IT TO YOU'" (169).

The union of moral liberty and civic responsibility penetrates the entirety of Douglass's lecture "Self-Made Men." One of the points Douglass was quick to address in his lecture was the absurdity of his title. As an English news reporter wrote:

[Douglass] remarked that the title of his lecture that evening involved something of a solecism. He freely admitted that there could not be self-made men in the world; all had begged, borrowed or stolen from somebody somewhere (1/4/60; 3:293).

As Douglass points out, citizens don't construct themselves ex nihilo. He anticipates this objection when he explicitly sets aside the "domains of theology" to consider that "if this life shall be regarded as an individual fact, standing alone, having no relations or bearings, full and complete in itself, wholly independent of, and disconnected with, any other state or place" then there are still many reasons for men to improve themselves (290 emphasis mine). Douglass doesn't view human individuals as isolates. Rather, he wants to consider a hypothetical case and investigate the private motives of human industry

By industry, however, Douglass specifies intellectual industry, not economic productivity. He cites Hugh Miller, the geologist; Benjamin Bannecker, the black astronomer; William Dietz, the black engineer; Toussant L'Overture, the liberator of Haiti, men who excelled because of their desire to educate themselves. Of the failings of "self-made" men, Douglass points out their self-obsessed egotism, and their tendency to disparage schools and colleges as "the means by which other men have risen above the level of the race." Douglass asserts that any self-educated man would have been better educated at a school than at home (300). In these passages, Douglass supports the idea that people's human instincts are best cultivated within social collectives.

Finally, Douglass undermines the achievements of the egotistical "self-made man" at the conclusion of his speech by stating that all action is worthless unless presided over by a moral purpose:

After all, my friends, let it be remembered [...] that neither self-culture nor any other kind of culture, can amount to much in this world, unless joined to some truly unselfish and noble purpose. Patriotism, religion, philanthropy--some grand motive power other than the simple hope of personal reward must be present. (300)

In both the introduction and conclusion of “Self-Made Men,” Douglass emphasizes to the religious and spiritual components of men’s private lives, but the importance of Douglass’s spiritual teleology has been steadily devalued by recent scholarship. Waldo Martin, among many others, has claimed that Douglass moved toward a secular faith in the human determination of affairs after the 1850s. Indeed, Douglass was always critical of shouting gospellers. But it would be a mistake to discount the powerful effect of evangelical faith on Douglass’s rhetoric, even at the end of his career.

Douglass’s debt to evangelistic religion is clear in his conception of historical progress as a moral struggle, rather than a technological or economic one. As David Blight has observed, Douglass’s references to history are often colored by postmillennial fervor. Douglass would have been steeped in postmillennial education while reading The Columbian Orator. He also would have been surrounded by postmillennial congregations at his own home in western New York State, the Burned-over district.<sup>121</sup>

Postmillennialism, an interdenominational faith that the Second Coming would come after human agency had prepared the world for Christ’s arrival, is evident in many of Douglass’s speeches, particularly those he gave at critical moments in the nation’s history. Like the apocalyptic strains of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural and Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” Douglass conceived of the struggle against slavery as a moral and theological battle in which people grouped together to advance a spiritual principle. Even in “Self-Made Men” Douglass declares, “it is good to think that in Heaven, all injustice, all

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See Whitney Cross’s The Burned-over District for an excellent study of evangelism in upstate New York.

wrong, all ignorance, and all vice, will be at an end, but how incomparably better is it, to wage a vigorous war upon these blighting evils and drive them from the present, so that the will of God may be done on earth as in heaven" (1460; 3291). The night of the Emancipation Proclamation, Douglass led the crowd singing, "Blow Ye Trumpet Blow," saying afterward, "it was not logic people wanted to hear but the trump of Jubilee." Similarly, at the conclusion of his famous 4th of July speech in 1852, where he emphasized the radical legacy of the Founding Fathers as a means of prophesying a better future, he concluded by reading a postmillennialist poem by Garrison called the "Triumph of Freedom"

God Speed the year of jubilee  
 The wide world over [...]  
 Until that year, day, hour arrive,  
 With head, and heart, and hand I'll strive,  
 To break the rod, and rend the gyve,  
 The spoiler of his prey deprive--  
 So witness heaven  
 And never from my chosen post,  
 Whate'er the peril or the cost,  
 Be driven. (FDP 2:387-88)

Douglass's Protestant religious affiliations, often hastily identified with capitalist ideals of progress by post-Weberian scholarship, actually turn his references to individuality inside out. For example, Douglass was hostile to the communitarian projects of Robert Owen because Owen was suggesting that systems were evil, not people. Douglass deplored this "doctrine of circumstances" because he saw slave holders exonerating themselves from sin by claiming they weren't evil--it was the system. Douglass believed people were individually responsible for slavery but he emphasized their

individuality to foster a sense of greater Christian collectivity

God looks down through the net-work of the system, and sees the sin individually. It will (not) be judged as a system.--every man will be judged by himself. Singly I come into this world, singly I live, and singly I die. The slave holder may charge it on a system, but it will be of no avail. (3:20/46, 1:193)

In this passage, and in others where Douglass emphasizes individuality, he bases his claim on principles of Christian duty, not economic independence.<sup>122</sup> Lecturing to an all black group in West Chatham, Canada in 1854, Douglass specifically warned his auditors that personal success was not their right, but their responsibility to themselves and to their race (2:537). The telos of individual success was moral, not simply personal.

Toward the end of his life, when Douglass was most prone to a rhetoric of economic self-reliance, and was publishing articles in the New National Era hostile to the collectivism of both labor unions and business combinations, he was also struggling to ensure that Americans would maintain a collective memory of the meaning of the Civil War. As David Blight has remarked, the topic of memory became an obsession for Douglass in the later years of his life. Less than a year before he died, in his last Memorial Day speech in Rochester in 1894, he insisted that the evil the South represented during the Civil War would never change. "Whatever else I may forget," Douglass said, "I shall never forget the difference between those who fought for liberty and those who fought for

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There is no shortage of citations suggesting Douglass's apparent agreement with the principles of possessive individualism identified by C. B. MacPherson: "The great truth is, [...] that every man owns himself and belongs to no one else" (2/24/54; 3:455). To take these comments out of context oversimplifies the influence of religion on Douglass's sense of human identity.

slavery: between those who fought to save the Republic and those who fought to destroy it" (qtd in Blight 238). At that point in his life, Douglass was not interested in securing the memory of his own achievements. Rather, he sought to ensure that the memory of the Civil War would guide the entire nation's future.

### **Voicing Slavery**

As twentieth-century readers, it is easy to forget that many of the passages in Douglass's Narrative were composed for the stage. Douglass's accounts of the slave songs, his apostrophe to the sloops on the Chesapeake, and his vivid descriptions of the whippings he witnessed are among the highpoints of his narratives. Douglass first developed these passages on stage, from the verbal act of telling, face-to-face, what the experience was like. Despite several recent articles analyzing the "voice" of Douglass's writing, few have discussed the unique characteristics of oral delivery and oral consciousness which so pervade Douglass's work. Rather, most treatments of voice in Douglass's work have approached the concept from fairly formalist orientations, noting the incidence of figurative language, call and response patterns, and exhortative language.<sup>123</sup> Douglass's use of voice to emphasize his moral message helps us to understand more clearly the complicated relationship between speech and moral vision in his speeches and writing.

Douglass's work, from both the platform and the page, often employs descriptions of sound and sight to emphasize the moral character of slavery. As Eli Weisel has said of the photographs of the Holocaust, pictures educate in one way, but pictures are silent.

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<sup>123</sup> See O'Meally; Fishkin/Peterson; Stepto; Andrews, "Novelization."

They do not direct the gaze of the viewer. Live testimony conveys a different kind of picture, one visualized in concepts but understood differently than if processed through the eye.

Walter Ong has identified several characteristics of oral discourse, one of the most intriguing being the relationship of vocalized sound to the interiority of human consciousness. Ong points out that “hearing can register interiority without violating it” (Orality 71, Presence). We use our sense of sound to plumb the world around us. We tap a box to determine what is inside. Sound conveys the depth and density of objects; in human discourse, it carries a visceral impression of spirit. On a cognitive level, voice has ability to “sound” the consciousness of others. We hear what is behind their words. Just as the voice of a preacher binds people together, the voice of the demagogue often drives them away. In oratory, pauses and tones of voice reveal character. In print, the strains of voice are conveyed through punctuation and word choice.

Orally based thought also manifests a different mode of organization, often featuring a more unified, aggregative, and centralized economy. The rhythms of a speaker’s voice generate structure. And most importantly, oral genres are practiced in an immediately shared context between speaker and hearer. For Ong, oral discourse connects the communicative act to the processes and rituals of daily shared experience. Paradoxically, the sense of interiority experienced through oral communication fosters a greater intersubjectivity among its participants.

Douglass’s sensitivity to sound as a means of conveying moral timbre is well illustrated by his discussion of the slave songs, and the way “the thought that came up,

came out--if not in the word, in the sound" (262). The slave songs speak a message from the interior of one mind to another. Their tone, inflection, and "sound" carry a message to Douglass. Douglass credits the songs with his "first glimmering conceptions of the dehumanizing character of slavery" (263). Although Douglass's ostensible purpose in discussing the songs is to discredit the notion that slaves are happy, his comments explain why he uses speech to convey the horrors of slave auctions and whippings. These scenes, such as his description of the slave drover in his 1852 Fourth of July Speech, function as melodramatic tableau but with an important difference. Douglass leads his audience through the tableau with his voice, emphasizing visual detail through sound, and re-arranging the visual experience into resonant narrative.

See, too, that girl of thirteen, weeping, yes!, as she thinks of the mother from whom she has been torn [...] suddenly you hear a quick snap, like the discharge of a rifle; the fetters clank, and the chain rattles simultaneously; your ears are saluted with a scream, that seems to have torn its way to the center of your soul. That crack you heard was the sound of the slave whip; the scream you heard was from the woman you saw with the babe. (2:373)

Instead of giving a logical refutation of slavery, which Douglass declares "would be to make myself ridiculous," Douglass shows his audience a scene from the slave trade. Douglass emphasizes the sounds of weeping and the screams of women and children. His voice draws attention to the demonic morality of slavery, to the experience of that lifeworld. For Douglass, the challenge of anti-slavery writing is to make it convey the effects of voice.

### **The Heroic Slave**

One of the most striking aspects of "The Heroic Slave" is Douglass's transmission

of his oratorical ethos to fictional narrative. From its opening encomium on the state of Virginia to the closing testimony of Tom Grant, the novel is permeated with oratorical rhetoric and demonstrations of the power of the speaking voice to convert opinion and to deliver the truths of the soul. Douglass imbues Madison Washington with an eloquence recognizable as Douglass's own style. Douglass himself operates as a disembodied topos throughout the entire story, charging the descriptions of the natural scenery and the voices of whites and blacks alike. This decentering of Douglass's mythos throughout the novel disseminates his ethical heroism through sound.<sup>124</sup> Justice is carried first by the voice, and later by the action of Madison Washington, the oratorical slave, who doubles as the bearer of Douglass's abolitionist philosophy. And furthermore, the message is then carried by Listwell and the sailors at the tavern. "The Heroic Slave" is about how oratory constructs ethical communities.

The two opening paragraphs of "The Heroic Slave" could have been taken from a Fourth of July oration:

The State of Virginia is famous in American annals for the multitudinous array of her statesman and heroes. She has been dignified by some the mother of statesman. History has not been sparing recording their names, or in blazoning their deeds. Her high position in this respect, has given her an enviable distinction among her sister states... (25)

After consecrating the state with the births of Jefferson and Washington, Douglass introduces his real subject, a Virginian slave, born of the same soil as Patrick Henry but

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Douglass summons the myth of heroic individualism only to reconstitute it as a kind of infectious social heroism. For readings of who read it as simple "heroic male individualism," see Yarborough.

whose similarities to Douglass himself are marked. Foremost is the speaker's reference to the slave as "a guiding star" seen through "parted clouds and howling tempests." The star symbolizes both Madison Washington and his guide to freedom. Nineteenth-century readers would also hear resonances of Douglass's newspaper, The North Star, as well as the romanticized image for which Douglass himself was famous. One early report described Douglass's oratory as a mixture of Daniel Webster's eloquence and Edwin Forrest's lionine ferocity:

It was the volcanic outbreak of human nature long pent up in slavery and at last bursting it imprisonment. It was a storm of insurrection--and I could not but think, as he stalked to and fro on the platform, roused up like the Numidian Lion--how that terrible voice of his would ring through the pine glades of the South. (1.26)

Douglass exploits his own reputation throughout the first pages of the novel. The speakerly exordium of "The Heroic Slave" gives way quickly to Washington's soliloquy, a Hamlet-like meditation on inaction that concludes with his resolution to be free.

Composed in the sublime style, it was one of Douglass's most popular stage techniques. Washington, whose "manly form [...] seemed to combine with the strength of the lion, a lion's elasticity" is also evocative of Douglass's popular reputation (28). The sound of the speech draws the novel's central narrator, Tom Listwell, to find out what "thoughts or feelings, or, it might be, high aspirations, guided those rich and mellow accents" (26). Hearing Washington's voice, "that unfailing index of the soul," Listwell realizes he is in the presence of a superior being (28).

Washington's declaration is not just a dramatic performance, however; it deliberately recalls the Declaration of Independence. Douglass emphasizes the effect of

Washington's concluding words "I shall be free." after which "a smile of satisfaction rippled upon his expressive countenance, like that which plays upon one who has but just solved a difficult problem or vanquished a malignant foe, for at that moment he was free, or at least in spirit" (28). Like Douglass's performances of John Philpot Curran's speech, Washington's declaration is a speech act. The words inaugurate his emancipation. Listwell remarks that Washington's repeated declarations to be free "imparted a glow to his countenance" (29).

As much as these words have a powerful effect on the speaker himself, lighting the path he will follow, they have an equally important effect on his auditor, who instantly converts to the cause of abolition. Washington's words not only convince him of the wrongfulness of slavery, but more importantly, they convince him of the humanity of the speaker:

"Here is indeed a man," thought he, "of rare endowments,--a child of God--guilty of no crime but the color of his skin,--hiding away from the face of humanity, and pouring out his thoughts and feelings, his hopes and resolutions to the lonely woods." (30)

More than his arguments against slavery, Washington's interior humanity speaks to Listwell. Washington's human voice opens a passageway between the speaker and listener. Washington's performance is not just a spectacle, whereby a disinterested consciousness is "affected" by the force of his argument, but a real bridge between minds.

Douglass continues to highlight the relationship between sound and consciousness at the start of Chapter 2. Douglass's narration emphasizes a sense of conscious interiority, of the world of thought and fancy:

A single lamp burned brightly on the center table. All was still and comfortable within; but the night was cold and dark; a heavy wind sighed and moaned sorrowfully around the house and barn, occasionally bringing against the clattering windows a stray leaf from the oak trees that embowered their dwelling. It was a night for strange noises and for strange fancies. A whole wilderness of thought might pass through one's mind at such an evening. The smoldering embers, partaking of the spirit of the restless night, became fruitful of varied and fantastic pictures, and revived by many bygone scenes and old impressions. (31)

On one level, Douglass works to set up an ominous tone for Washington's entrance. The prose is not traditionally oratorical in the sense of employing codes of stylized address, verbal apostrophe, or a lofty tone. Rather, it is gothic narrative. But the mood Douglass is attempting to convey is a deeply psychological one, the world of interior thought and experience. Douglass's narrative of the sound of leaves and clattering windows seeks to reach into the "wilderness of thought," where ideas and moods exist as impressions rather than arguments. In the speeches that follow--and chapter 2 is composed of a series of speeches given by Washington dramatizing the miseries of slavery--Douglass's strategy is to "sound out" his readers with the poignancy of Washington's voice.

For example, Washington's description of the forest fire does little to advance the plot. Rather, it's another opportunity for him to speak. Initially unwilling to express the feelings about the terrifying fire, he eventually discusses it at length. Washington displays his spiritual humility when he compares it to the Day of Judgement, but whether he is running from the conflagration of slavery or anticipating future battle is uncertain. His story also allows Washington to impress his auditors, and Douglass's readers, with his talents for sublime exposition:

Running before it, and stopping occasionally to take breath, I looked back

to behold its awful ravages, and to drink in its savage magnificence. It was awful, thrilling, solemn, beyond compare. When aided by the fitful wind, the merciless tempest of fire swept on, sparking, creaking, curling, roaring, out-doing in its dreadful splendor a thousand thunderstorms at once. From tree to tree it leaped, swallowing them up in its lurid, baleful glare, and leaving them leafless, limbless, charred and lifeless behind. The scene was overwhelming. (38)

At the end of the passage Washington sympathizes with the dying cries of the “fugitive” animals as he runs “from fire and from slavery” but the passage is less important for its allegorical content than for its visceral effect. Washington’s exhibition of the sublime is an argument for his humanity.

In similar fashion, the speech of one of the black foresters convinces Washington that he is a man to be trusted. Like the slave songs in Douglass’s Narrative, the forester’s words reveal his decency:

His soul broke out in humble supplication for deliverance from bondage. “Oh thou,” said he, “that hearest the raven’s cry, take pity on poor me! Oh deliver me! Oh deliver me! in mercy, O God, deliver me from the chains and manifold hardships of slavery! With thee, father, all things are possible. Thou canst stand and measure the earth. Thou hast beheld and drove asunder all nations,--all power is in thy hand,--thou didst say of old, “I have seen the affliction of my people, and am come to deliver them.”-- Oh look down upon our afflictions and have mercy on us.” But I cannot repeat his prayer, nor can I give you an idea of its deep pathos. (41)

Washington’s phrase, “nor can I give you an idea of its deep pathos” is an oratorical trope that Douglass uses in his Narrative as well. When used effectively, auditors accept the speaker’s words out of respect. It’s a compact between orator and audience. The emotions perhaps go too deep for public display. Social and literary decorum combine to reveal a truth that goes beyond telling. The irony of such testimony is that it accomplishes what it claims it cannot.

Douglass's exposition of the power of oratory is intensified in the final chapter of the novel where two sailors discuss Washington's insurrection on the Creole. The chapter promotes Douglass's faith in the spoken word in three ways. First, it demonstrates the relationship between Washington's words and deeds. He both speaks and acts revolution. Second, it is composed of the verbal testimony of another of Washington's converts, Tom Grant, who implicitly takes the role of anti-slavery lecturer as he retells the story. And finally, as Robert Stepto has observed, the chapter culminates in the transference of Washington's achievement to the bearers of his story. His words have materialized in the beliefs of a inter-racial community.

As Washington perceives the inner spirit of the forester through his words, Tom Grant admits that Washington's speech on the deck of the Creole completely disarmed his prejudice and allowed him to see what the man truly stood for: "I forgot his blackness by the dignity of his manner, and the eloquence of his speech. It seemed as if the souls of both the great dead (whose names he bore) had entered him" (66). Washington's announcement to the crew is both a martial and linguistic victory:

Men! the battle is over.--your captain is dead. I have complete command of this vessel. All resistance to my authority will be in vain. My men have won their liberty with no other weapons but their own **BROKEN FETTERS** (67)

Just as the men have liberated themselves with the broken chains and cuffs of their bonds, Madison turns the slander aimed at him, "black murderer," and demands to be honored for the deed: "We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, so were they" (66).

The effect of Washington's integrity is simultaneously dramatized for the reader by the discussion of the sailors who hear the story. As Williams and Grant debate the meaning of Washington's revolt before a crowd of publicans, Grant's personal integrity easily wins them over. In contrast, Williams' desperate bragging earns him little authority.

Williams went on in this strain, occasionally casting an imploring glance at the company for applause for his wit, and sympathy for his contempt of negro courage. He had, evidently, however, waked up the wrong passenger; for besides being in the right, his opponent carried that in his eye which marked him as a man not to be trifled with. (63)

Grant's bold posture, the pose Douglass struck throughout his entire career, conveys a sense of authentic resolve. Williams, in contrast, seeks to draw approval from the crowd but he lacks integrity. Like The Columbian Orator's outcast speakers, Cato, John Muir, and Arthur O'Connor, Grant's sense of conviction is powerful.

I'm resolved never to endanger my life again in a cause which my conscience does not approve. I dare say here what many men feel, but dare not speak, that this whole slave-trading business is a disgrace and scandal to Old Virginia. (63)

Although Grant continues to show a racial bias against blacks to the very end of the story, calling them "generally ignorant [...] fiends from the pit" and characterizing the black British soldiers as "stupid blockheads," his unabashed respect for Madison Washington gives these phrases an ironic tone. When Grant describes the way the black soldiers roll their eyes and smile impudently as they refuse to remit the slaves to their owners, Grant's narrative conveys both the residual racism of its speaker and its critique. The world has been turned upside down.

The transmission of oratorical performance from Washington to Tom Grant, from

black to white, underscores the universalist message of Douglass's oratory. The fight against slavery is no less important for whites as for blacks. Both have a duty as free individuals to help others. Washington's most noble characteristic is the duty he assumes when free. After Washington escapes to Canada, his main concern is not to help himself but to rescue his wife. For Douglass, true freedom is realized in individual acts of moral duty, not in selfish individualism. Similarly, once Listwell "hears" the message of Washington's humanity, he feels an obligation to atone for his past indifference to slavery (30). Grant, too, decides that he will no longer participate in the slave trade. Although he does not become an abolitionist in the Garrisonian mode, his words, those of a person whose racist opinions are crumbling, conclude the story.

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Douglass's oratory provides a crucial means of re-evaluating his writing, recovering the interpersonal and collectivist context of Douglass's representations of individual agency in his autobiographies. Douglass's heroism, often equated with a retrograde celebration of individuality, is spiritual. It invites readers to identify with, and to participate in Douglass's project. Similarly, Douglass's descriptions of the evils of slavery, such as Aunt Hester's whipping, sometimes associated with a lurid scopophilia, are attempts to materialize living tableaux of the moral crimes of the slave system. They derive from oral practices of collective witness, rather than private acts of contemplation. An awareness of Douglass's oratory also opens up the collectivist spirit of his later work such as "The Heroic Slave" and My Bondage and My Freedom. Douglass no longer

pleads his case against slavery to readers: he speaks to them as an equal. The spirit of freedom he defines in those works is composed of vocal and active duty, not ideologies of unencumbered possession. Although "The Heroic Slave" seems regrettably didactic to modern ears, it is an artifact of the radical, collectivist, and transgressive voice of anti-slavery which helped to precipitate the Civil War

## Chapter 6

### Republican Virtue and the Heroic Lecturess:

#### Sarah Josepha Hale and Harriet Beecher Stowe

In a recent review essay in American Literary History, Judith Fetterley poses the theoretical problem of what scholars should be doing with the republished women's literature of the nineteenth century. She is grateful that we have recovered this literature and made it easily available to students and scholars. Fetterley points out, however, that we still have few means asserting its aesthetic worth or recuperating its political value. Turning to the critical discourse about the "sentimentalism" of nineteenth-century women writers, Fetterley asks if current criticism threatens to isolate women's writing from other developments in literary history.<sup>125</sup> Fetterley is concerned, for example, that our present approaches to sentimental literature tend to fence off women's literature into the domain of antiquarian historicism. Even worse, in her view, is that discussions of women's popular writing are often tainted with negative connotations, recirculating myths about women's lack of agency and associating women's writing with male, imperialist cultural projects (606-8). Fetterley concludes that strong case for the redeeming political or aesthetic value of sentimentalism has yet to be made.

One literary genre that helps us extend our understanding of the political and aesthetic importance of sentimental literature is oratory. Rich in sentimental appeal, the oratory of the early nineteenth century was attractive to both men and women. Although

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Christopher Lasch asks a similar question of feminist scholarship in his review, "Meeting at the Crossroads." The New Republic 207 (Dec 7, 1992): 34-9.

religious and political oratory was generally a male preserve, the first half of the nineteenth century boasted a number of female orators who spoke courageously on Abolition, women's rights, and female education. Women's oratory of the period was sensational and influential, and it inspired many women to take a more visible and political role in shaping American culture. Like male oratory, women's public speech drew on logical argument as well as sentimental address.

Two writers, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Sarah Josepha Hale, strongly reflect the influence female oratory and the cooperative construction of the sentimental tradition. Generally identified as apologists for the "women's sphere," these writers also wrote in a tradition of male cultural critique. The forms of sentimental address in both Hale and Stowe's work derive from humanist theories of oratorical agency codified largely by eighteenth-century men--ministers and Common Sense rhetoricians.<sup>126</sup> Hale and Stowe transformed male oratorical ideals into feminine forms of public address. The work of these writers is an eloquent testament to the appropriation of masculinist active virtue for feminist purposes. Although both these writers proclaimed themselves for the "women's sphere" and were clearly uncomfortable with the masculinist postures of female orators, they were solidly engaged with mainstream oratorical culture. Neither passive nor marginal, their "sentimental" writing promoted a social philosophy of vocal and active republicanism.

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See Camfield for a study of Common Sense moral philosophy and the aesthetics of sentimentality in Uncle Tom's Cabin.

## **The Rhetoric of the Spheres**

The influence of women's participation in the oratorical milieu of the first half of the nineteenth century is still, however, a matter of debate. In the nineteenth century, following St. Paul's New Testament prohibition against women's speech in church, it was commonly held that "proper" women didn't speak in public (Titus 2.5; Rossi 305). As a general ideology, it greatly curtailed the public careers of most white, middle-class women. For this reason, while Frances Wright and the Grimké sisters have often been noted as precursors to the American feminist movement, their work has seldom been celebrated as an influential force on American letters. In contemporary literary historiography, they are exceptions that prove the rule. Nonetheless, recent scholarship has begun to uncover a number of exceptions to the ideology of women's public silence. Carla Peterson has recovered a richer understanding of black women's speech in the women's rights and Abolition movement. Similarly, Sandra Gustafson has demonstrated how Margaret Fuller's successful parlor lectures resisted the domesticating trends of nineteenth-century culture.

The challenge of hearing women's oratorical rhetoric in the nineteenth century hinges on the definition of "women" (what race? class? religious affiliation?), but more importantly, on the definition of "public." While the doctrine of separate spheres bluntly consigned men to politics and women to the home, thereby marginalizing female orators as monsters or religious zealots, recent feminist scholarship has begun to question the accuracy of the "domestic" paradigm to describe the social habits of women of the period. Women were active in many spheres outside the home, participating in parlor meetings,

magazine publication, and philanthropical work, not to mention the political work of abolition and women's suffrage. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of separate spheres was promoted by both men and women in the first half of the nineteenth-century as an ideal of civilized conduct. As Linda Kerber has summarized it, the problem with the doctrine of separate spheres is that it was a dominant rhetoric, but not necessarily an accurate description of how people lived their lives ("Separate").

Recognizing the function of separate spheres as a rhetoric addresses new understandings of the complexity of civic behavior. First, it allows room to make distinctions between the broadly descriptive terms that people use among themselves, and the analytical terms that historians, political scientists and sociologists use to describe them. As Nina Baym has pointed out, the simple equation of the "public" with the sphere of "men" was a common understanding in the nineteenth century, but that assumption conflates the domain of cultural debate (the newspaper, public opinion) with that of the physical state apparatus of government (the physically male arena of Congress, etc) (Baym 6). Women's active participation in magazine publication from the 1820s onward places them solidly within the public sphere, although that fact was not often recognized by men and women at that time. Studying more than 100 men and women's diaries of the first half of the century, Karen Hansen has suggested adding a third category for sociological analysis, the associative sphere, to describe the intermingling of men and women in friendship, light manual labor, social events and gossip, and church functions. Hansen's terminology is invaluable in demonstrating that domestic ideology had different emphases among different classes, despite its wide acceptance as a rhetoric. The poor moved easily

among the spheres. Talk of the “women’s sphere” was generally a middle-to-upper class concern (Cott), and a method women used to distance themselves from other women (Kerber, “Separate” 12)

A second advantage to recognizing the rhetoricity of the doctrine of spheres is its strategic function in the politics of nineteenth-century culture. Separate spheres helped organize cultural activity into distinct genres, a division which kept women disenfranchised and excluded from the competitive world of business. Within this framework, the doctrine was highly restrictive of women’s rights as citizens. Recent feminist scholarship, however, has pointed out that despite its tendency to exclude women from commercial and state power, the rhetoric of separate spheres also served women’s interests by providing them with a protective domain of their own, a domain which they enlarged by staking claims, in particular, in the burgeoning fields of journalism and fiction. Linda Kerber has argued that taking an interactive view of social processes we can see how “women’s allegedly ‘separate sphere’ [ . . . ] influenced and even set constraints and limitations on what men might choose to do--how, in short, that sphere was socially constructed both for and by women” (“Separate” 18). Thus, the definition of this space, a rhetorical project, plays a central role in organizing women’s relationships with men and with each other.

One of the central manipulators of the doctrine of separate spheres was Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of Boston’s Ladies’ Magazine (1828-36) and Godey’s Lady’s Book (1837-77), whose definition of women’s conduct derived from powerful New England

traditions of republican motherhood<sup>127</sup> By 1860, Hale's successful magazine broadcast her definitions of proper female conduct to more than 150,000 homes (Finley 177). Present scholarly consensus holds that Hale was a social conservative, but an active one, a proto-feminist who nonetheless advocated very limiting roles for women (Hoffman, Bardes and Gossett). As Patricia Okker's study of Hale demonstrates, Hale championed the rhetoric of the spheres as a protective device to mark off the bounds of a free space for women (16). Citing Hale's pioneering achievements in paying women for magazine contributions, Okker demonstrates that even though Hale advocated a retrograde ideology of domestic enclosure, she greatly extended the bounds of the domestic sphere to include new economic possibilities for women. Hale used the women's sphere to protect and cultivate women's freedoms (66). By subtly expanding the special provenance of women, Hale carried on the tradition of "republican motherhood," a tradition with political, social, and moral responsibilities (Kerber Women). For Hale, the women's sphere was intimately connected to all aspects of civilized life.

Hale's subtle extension of the bounds of the women's sphere is embodied in her use of the feminine nouns like "editress" and "authoress," terms which she hoped would emphasize women's contributions to society, and also minimize competition between the sexes (Hoffman, "Rhetorical" 171-3). Hale asked women to take pride in these terms and to celebrate their unique contributions to culture (GLB 1857, 57:177; 1867, 75:79; 1865,

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I am indebted to Bardes and Gossett's Declarations of Independence for its chapters on Hale. Their book studies women's political voice in fiction over the entire nineteenth-century.

09 279). In Hale's view, women should be judged by separate standards but allowed to flourish within their sphere. Apparently stopping short of political activism, Hale stretched these boundaries as far as she possibly could, giving women a space to grow artistically without direct competition with men.

But Hale's sexual doctrines were not always consistent. She endorsed many forms of public political work for women, including fundraising for the Bunker Hill monument and lobbying for women's appointment to the Vassar faculty. The success of her Vassar campaign blocked the employment of male faculty there. Furthermore, Hale did not object to women entering the public sphere for certain philanthropical projects, provided they did it in groups (Okker 69-70). For Hale, the real issue was to avoid the "appearance" of gladiatorial contests with men. As Lawrence Martin points out, in the first number of her Boston Ladies Magazine she promises male readers that they will find nothing within the pages of the magazine that will cause disharmony in the home. Men will find their mates enriched for their reading, more interesting conversationalists, and better educators of their children (Martin 48-9). Their wives and lovers will be instructed in finest arts of domesticity. Hale's inaugural number at Godey's features similar rhetoric: "nothing [will] be introduced to undermine those sacred relations of domestic life, in which the creator has placed the sceptre of woman's empire. We are always at home" (1837, 14:5). Hale actively cultivated women's educational achievement in such a way that seemed entirely harmless to men's enterprise.

At the same time Hale was defending terms such as "editress," however, she

declined to use the term “poetess,” concluding that “poet’s minds are of no sex” (25)<sup>128</sup> Hale’s inconsistency is a quietly progressive move, suggesting that the poetry of Hemans and Sigourney should be judged without regard to their sex. Her claim may be less bold than it seems considering the reputation of many female poets of Hale’s day, but within the bounds of sentimental verse, Hale was willing to let women compete with men.

The inconsistencies of Hale’s sexual agenda derive from trying to plot her philosophy on moral, commercial, domestic, literary and psychological indexes which don’t always square with each other. These apparent discrepancies explain why it is so helpful to view the concept of “separate spheres” as a rhetoric which altered to fit different social configurations, rather than a clear-cut universal doctrine. Hale was pragmatic. For instance, she believed that using fashion plates to sell magazines was not always in women’s best moral interests. Faced with a tough moral choice, she printed the fashion plates for Godey’s and sold magazines (Finley; Lehuu). Similarly, although Hale generally chose to avoid competition with men, the success of her female talent pool was threatening to writers like Hawthorne. Evidently, Hale concluded that women’s need to support themselves overruled questions of competition for publishers’ dollars. Most of all, Hale’s work needs to be evaluated with a sense of its historical moment. By 1860, the

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Hale makes this admission in a footnote which reads, “In the ‘Ladies Wreath’ [...] we used the term ‘poetess’ to designate a female writer of verse. But this feminine designation was objected to by the learned editor of the ‘Christian Review.’ He says, “the true poet is a maker [...] and the mind which can exert this kingly power is of no sex.” We submit to his authority, and therefore shall use the term no more.” Hale’s compliance with masculine authority in this passage is representative of her brand of feminism: by feigning submission, she advances her cause.

general professionalization of American culture obliged Hale to encourage women to become doctors and lawyers. Twenty years earlier, she probably wouldn't have ventured such a declaration.

The progressive qualities of Hale's career derive from two sources. The first is her role in the creation of mass culture in the United States. As a booster of women's participation in the publishing industry, she placed women in culturally competitive and political positions whether she acknowledged it or not. Over time, her moderate insistence that women take roles in the professional fields of education, medicine, and production led her to more progressive beliefs. Like her editorial peer, N.P. Willis, Hale's early and powerful contribution to the professionalization of the media and literature had unforeseen and enormously significant consequences. Hale created the public avenues through which more radical voices would be able to speak in later decades.

The second source of Hale's progressivism is her connection to republican virtue (Bardes/Gossett, Hoffman). As described by Linda Kerber, the republican mother served her children as both the central teacher and exemplar of virtue in the American family. Although the nation's civic health depended on women performing this job, they were not welcome to take part in political debates unless dire circumstances required it (Women 11). The political crises of the 1820s and 30s precisely invoked the public responsibilities of the republican mother.

Several biographers have claimed that Hale was educated by her brother, a Dartmouth graduate. As Nicole Tonkovitch has pointed out, however, it is likely that her biographers of the 1920s and 30s mixed speculation with fact. Whether Hale indeed

studied from her brother's Dartmouth textbooks, as Ruth Finley claims, is unknown. But it is likely her brother would have shared with her with the same egalitarian impulses that inspired other Dartmouth graduates of the period such as Caleb Bingham, David Everett, Daniel Webster, and Stephen S. Foster (the rabid abolition minister, not the song writer). Early Dartmouth political ideology applauded heroic womanhood and advocated no-nonsense principles of female education. This vision of a woman's moral responsibility harkened to the most radical virtues of the Revolution.

Evidence of Hale's active republicanism has been recently recovered. For many years, scholars described Hale's magazine as an ideological vehicle of submissive piety and benign Victorianisms. As Laura McCall has demonstrated, the contrary is actually true. Godey's did not market female submission, piety, and domesticity as ideals of conduct. Rather, the women featured in the magazine were assertive, independent, and often heroic (232).

Hale's activist republicanism is also evident in a novel she published, anonymously, in 1839, which explores the limits of women's public discourse. The Lecturess, or Woman's Sphere was written in response to Fanny Wright's and the Grimké sisters' speaking tours of the Northeast from 1836-8. This short novel describes the waning fortunes of Marion Gayland, an abolition and women's rights speaker. It concludes with the wasted heroine on her deathbed, repenting her life on the platform and confessing that a woman's place is in the home at the side of her husband. Read in conjunction with its epigraph, (from Titus 2:5, "train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of

God may not be discredited.”) the novel’s purpose seems fairly clear: the sphere of woman is in the home, not on the stage. But as her novel’s bifurcated title suggests, Hale illustrates two spheres of women’s conduct and Hale never discredits her protagonist’s talents as a speaker. Curiously, the novel spends little time depicting the joys of home life, briefly alluding to happiness of heroine’s friends, and seldom discussing the details of those lives. Rather, the novel focuses on Marion’s public activities, for better and for worse, and the problems those activities create in her marriage.

As the novel repeats several times, Marion’s great sin is her pride. At 13 years of age, Marion insults her mother by telling her she won’t “wear out” her own life sewing (13). She brutally compares her friend’s happy marriage to slavery (27, 37-39). She angrily defies her husband’s wishes. She explicitly repents this behavior at the end of her life, aided by the voice of the narrator, who also declares her faults to be those of insensitivity and pride (83).

The focus on Marion’s headstrong behavior, however, has the effect of undermining the novel’s brief and didactic conclusion. Marion is an exciting character, far more interesting than her submissive friend, Sophia. After Sophia defends the reciprocal restraints of her marriage, Marion responds in passionate oratory, “O! woman, woman when will you be true to yourself, when will you tear away the veil of superstition that enshrouds you, and dare to stand forth the being your creator designed you, and asserting your rights, dare to be free? (27). Marion’s enthusiasm often overwhelms Sophia’s sober counsel, and she spouts ideas that Hale, the alleged voice of domesticity, would hesitate to include in her magazine. When Sophia suggests that Marion attend to her home, Marion

violently rejects her friend's advice

Upon my word, Sophia, I think you have taken up the lecturing business in good earnest. Why will you not publish your thoughts for the benefit of all the naughty wives, who presume to have opinions of their own? Pray do. It is really a duty to society to enlighten poor, foolish women upon their duty to their husbands; for some will maintain that mutual concessions are requisite to render married life happy. Think, my dear Sophia, what renown would attend any person who might aid in proving the folly of such an idea, and in convincing the soft sex how incumbent it is upon them to yield to their lords, upon all occasions and at all times. I will promise to subscribe largely to such a work. I know I can venture to promise that without referring to my husband. Good-bye. Let me know when your "Treatise upon the Duties of Wives" is ready for publication. (72)

Hale's strategy in passages such as these is highly sophisticated. On one hand, Marion's polemic soundly defeats the doctrines of domestic ideology. Contemporary audiences would read Marion's speech as a loud rebuke of Catherine Beecher's recent essay on the Duty of American Females concerning Abolition. This seems odd coming from Hale, who popularly situated herself in league with Beecher's ideals of femininity. On the other hand, Marion's distempered overwhelms her basic civility. The narrator generally supports Sophia's advice that Marion refrain from public lecturing. The narrator also describes how the abolitionists of Philadelphia actively undermine Marion's marriage (102-4). While these narrative hints dissuade women from public oratory, the narrator often succumbs to oratorical rhetoric. In apostrophes to the reader, Hale's narrator exclaims, "O I would rather never, never again see those I have loved, and whose remembrance is twinned about my heart, than to meet the averted eye of changed affection...." (44). The narrator lectures readers in the text with self-consciously oratorical rhetoric, and also allows Marion to plead her own case eloquently. In these ways, Hale's novel undermines

the complacent message it ostensibly promotes. Although Hale is clearly not engaging in actual oratory, these passages indicate the extent to which she is drawing on stylistic forms generally reserved for men and adapting that discourse for her own feminist purposes in print

One source of the tension the novel generates is its portrayal of communal and individualistic behavior, the contending forces of republicanism and liberalism. Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett have pointed out that Hale “preached the necessary sacrifice of the individual will to the good of the whole” (32). In their examination of the differing political agendas of Sedgewick’s Hope Leslie and Hale’s Northwood, they demonstrate Hale’s consistent nostalgia for the disinterested collectivism of the early republic: in times of strife, individuals must sacrifice themselves for the good of the family and nation. In this paradigm, the role of women is clearly scripted. They need to control their impulses for the good of the family. Marion herself explains this philosophy at length

Woman is a creature of the affections. From her cradle, her dream is love, for that she barter all else. She loves devotedly, disinterestedly, and she asks but love in return. She marries, and her visions of happiness are as pure as the thoughts of angels. She measures her husband’s heart by her own, and that is the rock upon which her peace is wrecked. Man, by nature selfish, has no conception of the self-denying love of women, and soon, very soon, the predominant trait in his character becomes visible. (75, emphasis mine)

Marion both proclaims the power of women’s self-denying affections and struggles against them. As women succumb to the selfishness of their husbands, their spirit is crushed.

The subtext is a political debate between republican disinterestedness and liberal

economic self-interest, presented here as a gendered allegory within which women are the true source of republican spirit, taming the “commercial” self-interest of their mates. Marion, remarking that her sex is the fount of civic virtue, decides that if she doesn’t speak her conscience, she’ll be crushed. While it appears that Marion is justifying her own individualistic behavior, her motives are clearly derived from the same republican tradition she appears to oppose, the obligation to speak one’s conscience for the good of the nation.

The central irony of Marion’s apparently individualistic pride is that it is motivated by republican upbringing, and as such, Hale can’t entirely censure her behavior. Marion’s mother, like Hale herself, raised fatherless children by stressing the importance of religion, industry, and independence (16). Although Hale attended Episcopal services in Boston, she was brought up in the heart of Calvinist New Hampshire where freedom was associated with “duty,” and not just with personal volition. Indeed, Marion’s first lecture of the novel is a clear example of active virtue, where “she knew all that she had to encounter: but strong in the consciousness of right, she would brave it all” (11-12 emphasis mine). Marion truly represents the active political legacy of New England theology when she declares, “I do not, when I appear before the public, merely echo the opinions of others, learned from books. Every word I speak is dictated by my heart, by the wish to raise my sex, to establish that equality between them and man which justice calls for” (35 emphasis mine).

Hale complicates this tradition by turning Marion’s inner voice against her. After her breakdown in Charleston, the voice of her conscience, the trump card of post-

Edwardian evangelism. speaks a different message

During her illness, Marion had leisure for reflection; and the still, small voice of conscience, unheard or unheeded amid the noisy shouts of popular approval, or the excitement of opposition, now found its way to her heart, exposing by its truth-searching power every motive and principle of action. Marion shuddered [ . . . ] to find that her actions instead of flowing from a pure desire to benefit her fellow beings, were in fact the result of obstinate unyielding, pride, and a craving for popularity. (57)

Recognizing her own self-interestedness, Marion is obliged to resign. She doesn't. As a result, the narrator regretfully condemns her decision. But the narrator's message is not that women to keep silent for the good of the nation. Marion's desire to speak and her active conduct are the cornerstones of Hale's republicanism. Rather, Hale's message is that women should not confuse civic activism with a craving for popularity.

Hale's activist feminism is also evident in the way she coded her language in Godey's Lady's Magazine. While Ruth Finley finds Hale's silence on the Civil War within the pages of Godey's strong evidence for her conservatism, she also points out that Hale had little alternative. Louis Godey vowed that his magazine would never discuss controversies of religion or politics (176-194; GLB March, 1856). Finley also points out that Hale attempted to repair sectional distrust thorough historical fables. Hale's "Heroic Women of the Revolution" series often gave credit to Southern women. She published tales of intermarriage between North and South. For four years prior to the war, she published articles praising Colonial and Federal loyalty to the southern states (180-190). Hale believed the main cause of animosity between North and South was sectional conflict between industrial and agricultural economies. In her eyes, the issue was not simply slavery--it was who would dominate the other (182-3). Thus, from the 1840s to 1860,

Hale often used the word union with a double meaning. Writing on a post office act in 1845, Hale argued

Domestic associations are not of trifling importance . . . it is this union of hearts and memories which must preserve and perpetuate our political union. When feelings of kindly interest are cherished by all, there will be no danger of discord between the states. The narrow split that sees a rival or enemy in every different section will yield to the ties of relationship or good feeling, binding individuals and families to cherish and extend the familiarity of intercourse which may now be maintained in every part of our common country (180-1)

Hale's attempt to defuse the political competition among the states is explicit, but softened by its emphasis on domestic harmony. While Hale's attempt to make the political personal may seem like an inverted feminism--even anti-feminist, with its faith in a toothless domesticity to cure national strife--it can also be read as an example of Hale's strategy of political commentary through domestic metaphor.

Hale also used coded language to address the issues of women's rights and abolition. Prior to her publication of The Lecturess, just on the heels of Angelina Grimké's final public performances in Boston and Philadelphia, Hale upheld women's right to speak within the pages of Godey's. Although Hale never editorialized about the Grimké sensation, she did publish a five-act play entitled "Esther" (GLB June-Dec. 1838). Hale follows the Biblical tale closely but employs abolitionist typology to discuss slavery.

The play validates women's central role in the fight against slavery. In July's issue, Esther seeks to forget the political problems of the Jews and dallies with her lover claiming, "I thank God / That he hath placed me in a humbler sphere, / Where peace and love and sweet affections grow" (2). Her father Mordecai, however, demands that she go

to the King's palace to help her people:

But self must yield to duty's higher call [ ... ]  
 [your heart] has noble chords untouched til now,  
 Which may respond to the high notes of joy,  
 That like the swelling of ocean waves  
 When the bright moon rides over them in her might  
 Shall burst responsive from a nation's voice.  
 And hail their deliverer! (4-5)

Following the Congressional gag rule of 1836, when Congress refused to accept any more petitions from women protesting slavery, Hale's allegory is significant. Esther first shrinks from speaking to the King, fearing for her life, but her father charges her with words that would have cheered any prospective Abolitionist.

Tell [Esther] 'tis she who must avenge our wrongs--  
 For this cause she went forth,--for this she was rais'd,  
 To greatness, by her God, to queenly power,--  
 And now she must stand forth, and nobly dare  
 Danger and death, if peril wears that form,  
 To compass her designs, and save from wo  
 The persecuted remnant of her race [ ... ]  
 And tell her, too, nor spare one warning word  
 That if by fear of mortal vengeance sway'd  
 Or if, with woman's weakness, clinging still  
 To that vain shadow, life,--she hesitates  
 And holds back her ready aid  
 From those who supplicate in vain for life  
 Their blood, which she has suffered to be shed,  
 Shall cry to her aloud from the cold earth (GLB August 1838, 79)

As in the biblical tale, Esther finally overcomes her fear and pleads her case before the king. While Hale has often been rightly accused of appearing to foster highly restrictive roles for women, her lightly veiled allegory suggests the opposite. She was sympathetic to women's Abolition protests. Her allegory also points out the danger of such doctrines, and the need to advance them with discretion.

In this context, we can see Hale working to enlarge women's social influence in several ways. First, she codes her approval of women's speech within the acceptable confines of Old Testament typology. Second, she addresses the issue squarely in The Lecturess, ostensibly condemning women's speech on one hand, but validating the right to speak on the other. Finally, her anonymous publication of the novel suggests that she preferred to stay on the periphery of controversy, maintaining an undisputed pulpit in the "women's sphere" which few men would dare to challenge. Hale took personal credit for only one sentence in The Lecturess. The epigraph to Chapter 3 reads: "The wish to promote the reputation of my own sex and my own country were among the earliest mental emotions I can recollect --MRS S J HALE" (23). This is the chapter where Marion declares, "No, no, I will not abandon the cause. I will never acknowledge the inferiority to which so many of my sex assent. I will publish my opinions, if they avail nothing more, they may lead some few to think" (25). Although Hale's political aspirations didn't always find literal expression within the pages of Godey's, she did write in codes that women could hear.

In contrast to some myths about women's public speech in the first half of the nineteenth century, female speakers were not uniformly reviled with hisses, jeers and bad press. Frances Wright was infamous for her anti-clerical doctrines and free-love philosophy, rather than for than for her role as a public speaker. It wasn't until her third public lecture in New York City in 1829, when she began her strident critiques of the clergy, that the newspapers called her "a bold blasphemer and a voluptuous preacher of licentiousness" (Waterman 169). In fact, her lectures were often well received,

particularly by the liberal press (149-163, 180).<sup>129</sup> After her first lecture at the Masonic Hall in New York City in 1829, the Commercial Advertiser commended her performance as an orator. Although the intellectual content of women's public performances was sometimes marginalized by newspaperman's prurient comments about their physiques, the first reports of Wright's performances evaluated her without prejudice.<sup>130</sup>

Her person is striking and commanding, and her carriage as a disclaimer graceful. Her features are strong and expressive; nor did they lose any of their expression for want of exercise [ . . . ] Her voice, which filled the room without apparent effort on the part of the speaker, is both strong and sweet. We recollect no female whose recitations in this city have been celebrated, at all comparable to this lady in particular. Her enunciation is perfect, and she has complete command over it. Her emphasis and pauses, and the whole delivery are excellent, and her gestures appropriate and graceful. So far as these qualities constitute an orator, we believe she is unrivaled by any of the public speakers, of any description in this city. For an hour and a half she held the attention of her audience enchained [ . . . ] Nor would it be doing justice to the lady, if we did not add, that her language was singularly well chosen and accurate; that there was so much of the eloquence of style, added to that of manner; and keeping of the whole performance was so good that the sensation of the ludicrous, naturally suggested by its novelty, was entirely suppressed. (167)

As long as Wright spoke about the foundations of rational knowledge and progressive

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Mrs. Trollope, who had been appalled by the conditions at Nashoba, was greatly surprised by Wright's inaugural lecture in Cincinnati, writing: "we congratulated ourselves that we had the courage to be among the number [of people in the crowd] for all my expectations fell far short of the splendor, the brilliance, the overwhelming eloquence of this extraordinary orator. . . . It is impossible to imagine anything more striking than her appearance. Her tall, majestic figure, the deep and almost solemn expression of her eyes, the simple contour of her finely formed head, unadorned, except by its own natural ringlets; her garment of plain white muslin, which hung about her in folds that recalled the drapery of a Greek statue, all contributed to produce an effect, unlike anything I had seen before, or expect to see again" (Waterman 149).

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See Caroline Levander's "Bawdy Talk" for a study of Hale and James's oratorical women, and the restrictions women speakers labored under in the nineteenth century.

education. complaints about the impropriety of a women on the speaking platform were minimal. It was when she spoke of the conspiracy of the "Christian Party" and birth control that she was reviewed with hostility. In 1836, when she returned to the United States for a second series of lectures, she also angered people with her attacks on chartered monopolies. Her anti-Bank posture alienated Whigs; her beliefs in gradual emancipation earned her no support with Garrisonians. Wright's "free-lovism" and political doctrines caused her infamy, not her voice

Similarly, the Grimké sisters generated controversy for their bold attacks on Northern prejudice and fights with the conservative clergy of Brookfield, Massachusetts (Rossi 286-8). Extant newspaper accounts of their appearances are fragmentary and often restricted to editorial summary, but they are instructive for the breadth of opinion they provide. In July 1837, the sisters debated two men named Page and Morrill in Amesbury, Massachusetts on the topics, "Does the Bible Sanction Slavery," and "Were Northern Laborers More Degraded Than Southern Slaves."<sup>131</sup> In the Morning Courier of July 14, 1837, the editors noted they didn't hear the Grimkés but "it is said their oratory was of the first order." The Courier of July 21st criticized both parties for statements that "were made that every reasonable man knows to be incorrect. The Bible was referred to in no respectful manner. The unchasteness of some of the language was even sufficient to occasion the blush upon many of the fairer parts of the audience." Advertisements at the

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The most detailed account of the sister's speaking tours of 1837-8 is Keith Melder's "Forerunners of Freedom," which names many of the cities and general dates. I have used his article to find extant copies of newspapers that discuss the Grimké appearances.

back of the journal, however, continued to hawk Angelina Grimke's "Appeal to Christian Women" and "Letter to Garrison." There was no attempt on the part of the editors to vilify or marginalize the women's achievement. On July 28th, the same paper published a defense of the Grimkes based on one critic's attempt to sexualize their performance:

The author of the communication in the last Herald [Boston?], containing a most indecent allusion to the Misses Grimke must be hard pushed, indeed, for anti-abolition arguments, when he is compelled to resort to such base and contemptible means to wound the feelings of a female, with whom he does not happen to agree in sentiment. Such miserable attempts at wit, as the writer in the Herald so naturally indulges in, will not, he may be assured, be sanctioned by the respectable of his own party, much less by the community generally; and we wonder greatly that the editors of the Herald should have permitted such a foul mouthed booby to dabble in their columns. His "supposia pedis," judging from the character of his communication, might be directed at a more respectable and decent business than that of searching for ladies' garters.

On August 4th the paper printed Mr. Page's complaint that he was misquoted in the July 28th Liberator, and on August 11th, one writer from East Kingston argued that townspeople should have the right to block the Grimkes from speaking in their grange by vote. Clearly, the Grimkes stirred up controversy in Amesbury, but it is by no means clear that their messages were ignored or marginalized by the press. At least two of the reports take the women's arguments seriously, and Page's follow-up letter suggests he and Morrill were vainly struggling to secure a public victory.

The curious aspect of Hale's novel is that it takes the least objectionable aspect of women's public speech, the fact that they are speaking, rather than the content of what they say, as its chief object of scrutiny. And although Marion dies pathetically contrite for her excesses, her right to speak is affirmed throughout the novel. Hale never exposed

herself to the kind of attacks that Marion or the Grimkes experienced. She was in no position to risk her editorial job for the slim reward it would yield. But Hale did speak out emphatically, and politically, though she tailored her public intrusions to suit the majority taste of her age.

### **Stowe's Sentimental Activism**

In recent criticism, Uncle Tom's Cabin has been heralded as a triumph of anti-eloquence. As the argument runs, Stowe celebrates the importance of individual feeling over collective action, to end slavery, we need to obey our hearts rather than our heads. Put another way, if we confront slavery personally, rather than as an abstract proposition of civic oratory, debate will be unnecessary. Slavery will be condemned without a word. In Stowe's other novels, such as The Minister's Wooing, there seems to be a similar rhetorical strategy at work. The Doctor labors to publish a System of Theology which pales next to the real-life religion Mary Scudder "lives" in her every deed. The language of her heart is more powerful than the Doctor's theology. Or, as in Pogonuc People, Stowe affirms the world of domestic affection as the real cement of early national society, rather than abstract sermonizing or civic debate.

Implicit in the distinction between "feeling" and "speaking" are gendered assumptions about women's and men's social roles. Although current scholarship is divided about whether Stowe's apparently matriarchal orientation provides a clear alternative to the "masculinist" tendencies of analytic theology and civic declamation, the opposition between male and female "discourse" organizes many discussions of Uncle

Tom's Cabin <sup>132</sup>

Stowe's feminism and political vision are poorly served by this formulation. Even though Stowe was a central figure in the creation of the nineteenth-century's "women's sphere," her New England upbringing encompassed a far more comprehensive understanding of domestic ideology than its modern day apologists describe. Stowe's domesticity and her sentimentalism were rooted in a religious, philosophical, and political vision of "benevolence" which was shared equally by men and women. Like Hale, Stowe was greatly influenced by ideologies of Republican Motherhood. In Stowe's particular case, this vision was shaped by a variety of powerful forces: the republican myths of disinterested public duty; the religious theories of human benevolence conveyed to her by her father; and finally, the literary tradition of active virtue. Stowe was brought up to express herself in public, not just in the kitchen or the parlor. While Stowe was clearly uncomfortable with the masculinist postures of the female orators of her day, she was strongly drawn to those roles.

Stowe's work is better understood as participating alongside masculine forms of moral critique and social commentary (Camfield). While Jane Tompkins and Gillian Brown have argued that Stowe's domestic sentimentalism offers an alternative to

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Scholars who discuss the empowering aspects of Stowe's matriarchal and domestic vision are Crozier, Tompkins, Berkson, Baym, and Ammons, "Heroines," Douglas, and Roberson, "Matriarchy," find Stowe's domestic alternative "capitulates to the ideology of hegemonic masculine power" ("Matriarchy" 122). Yellin, like Sundquist, suggests that Stowe's domestic alternative lacks political voice. Brown finds Stowe's "kitchen economy" an alternative to the masculine world of politics, but complicit in the growth of liberal individualism. Pilditch and Camfield look at Stowe's use of traditionally "masculinist" discourses.

masculine politics. Stowe's sentimentalism was republican, not just domestic. Stowe's antebellum writing was not simply an attempt to feminize men's conduct, but a demonstration of how the ideals of Calvinist republican oratorical practice could be extended to, and appropriated by women. Ironically, the solidly republican elements of Stowe's work, her belief in the importance of feeling, duty, and family, have been interpreted in our day as a withdrawal from republican community into the private, domestic world of liberal individualism. In the words of Catherine O'Connell, "rather than representing a retreat from public political discourse, as some critics have suggested, [Stowe's] endorsement of the authority and authenticity of emotional experience in Uncle Tom's Cabin offers an alternative way into the public debate over slavery" (35)

Stowe's literary domesticity is strongly invested in promoting women's benevolence, a concept with a complex religious, social, and philosophical history. Like the discourse of "virtue," the discourse of "benevolence" was thought by many social historians of the twentieth century to be part of a repressive apparatus of control. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to recover the radical elements of benevolence in the religious and social struggles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>133</sup>

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See Lois Banner for a good bibliography of the scholarly debate over benevolence and its institutional manifestations in the early nineteenth century. Banner, who argues for the radical potential of benevolent societies, puts great emphasis on republican millennialism. Despite its Foucauldian novelty, Richard Broadhead's article "Sparing the Rod," recirculates the arguments of the earlier social historians who see benevolence as a purely conservative force. Susan Roberson's "Matriarchy" also discusses the repressive effects of domestic benevolence. Of course, in Stowe's day, women's association with benevolence had explicitly institutional connotations: women were involved in benevolent charities and societies. Lori Ginzberg has demonstrated that women's capacity to express benevolence was used at the beginning of the nineteenth century for both progressive and

As Stowe's New England novels demonstrate, her ideals of benevolence were Calvinist. Although Stowe came to reject the stern determinism of Edwards' theology in favor of a more temperate and loving God, Calvinism nonetheless shaped her ideals of duty, Christian conduct, and community. Stowe's criticism of Calvinism was itself derived from that very tradition. Her departure from the theology of her father was encouraged by a long tradition of revisionary theology, practiced by Lyman Beecher himself, and which derived from the reforms of Hopkins and Edwards.<sup>134</sup> As I show in my first chapter, Edwards' and Hopkins' adaptation of secular benevolence softened the determinism of Calvin, and simultaneously affirmed a belief in human agency to realize God's mission on earth. Lyman Beecher further reformed the Calvinism he inherited, and passed this revisionary spirit on to his children.

Beecher's liberalization of Calvinist doctrine is particularly evident in his views on infant damnation. Beecher, perhaps sensing that Calvinists were losing an important battle

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conservative uses: 1) women's association with benevolence validated their obligation to political action, and 2) it established grounds for attacking radicalism. Ginsberg cites Catherine Beecher's criticism of Fanny Wright as an example of how women's imputed capacity for benevolence could be used by social conservatives to undermine extremism. "there she stands with brazen and brawny arms attacking the safeguards of all that is venerable and sacred in religion" (26). Ginsberg's work is particularly useful for recognizing how women's benevolent associations functioned to advance a feminist agenda by feigning to occupy a depoliticized sphere. Social reforms activated by women's pangs of sympathy for the poor or the downtrodden allowed women to combine and advance themselves publicly without appearing to tread upon men's turf.

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For good discussions of Beecher's theology in the context of Stowe's writing, see Lawrence Buell's "Calvinism Romanticized," and Dorothy Berkson's "Millennial Politics and the Feminine Fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe." See also Lyman Beecher's sermons from 1807-8, "On the Doctrine of Election," and "The Government of God Desirable."

for membership when forced to admit that some children were born with no chance for salvation, retrieved Edwards' distinction between the infant's "natural ability" and "moral depravity" to suggest that children had a chance for salvation through their natural ability. Phrased this simply (which Beecher wisely avoided), it is easy to see how close he came to preaching heretical doctrine. Beecher's modification of Calvinist ideas of election and predestination was intended to accentuate people's accountability rather than their freedom. But as a result, Beecher was often accused of leaning toward an Arminian doctrine of grace-through-works (Autobiography 1:169). At his celebrated trial in Cincinnati for promoting Arminianism, Beecher doggedly refuted the allegations against him but he was aware of the strength of the case against him. Advising his son, Henry Ward, prior to Henry's ordination exam, Beecher slyly counseled him to keep quiet about incendiary modern topics and to keep his answers based on conservative orthodoxy.

Lyman's revisionary legacy remains notable in almost all of Stowe's writing, but his concern with the case of the infant child is particularly instructive. In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe suggests that Topsy is redeemed through the spiritual generosity of Eva, a person whose full name underscores the evangelical attempt to bring about the millennium through human agency. Despite their emphasis on predestination, both Edwards and Hopkins agreed on the central role human benevolence played in the evangelical project: it was the linchpin that connected human agency to the kingdom of God.

But Stowe's beliefs in human benevolence were expressed in a New England syncretism of religious, political, and literary voices ranging from the Methodists to the Quakers, from Hutcheson to Jefferson, and from Blair to Alison (Banner; Camfield).

Benevolence was progressive and collectivist. It was manifested in deeds of group philanthropy and individual kindness. It was simultaneously heroic, matriarchal, and patriotic. And although the disinterested benevolence of the republican rhetor may have always been nostalgic, it continued to operate as a utopian ideal of early national New England.

In her exploration of Stowe's millennialism, Dorothy Berkson identifies in Stowe's work a warm matriarchal agenda to dismantle the frigid logic and monarchical authority of Edwardsian Calvinism. Berkson proposes that while Stowe's project is feminist, it is not exclusive. Citing a passage from My Wife and I, Berkson shows that Stowe believed that benevolence "is not a particularly feminine characteristic, but belongs equally to many men of the finest natures" (245). Berkson asserts that the cornerstones of Stowe's vision of social justice and harmony are "communal, anti-materialistic, non-competitive, racially tolerant, and essentially classless" (245-6). In short, this is the social vision of The Columbian Orator, a text celebrated by Stowe in several of her books, but hardly ever identified with matriarchal values.<sup>135</sup> Stowe is not proposing a matriarchy, but rather a

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Few Stowe scholars mention the religious and communitarian origins of the individualistic "voice of conscience" as articulated in Calvinist texts like The Columbian Orator. Rather, most treatments of "individualism" conflate it with "liberalism." See Gillian Brown, who uses the terms, "possessive individualism," "history of individualism," "liberal humanism," and "American individualism," interchangeably in the introduction to her study of domesticity. See also Eric Sundquist's introduction to New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin, for example, where he asserts that Uncle Tom's Cabin marks a shift in Christian theology away from the community and toward the individual conscience, a strategy Sundquist feels "threatened to make slavery a guilt-ridden conundrum admitting no clear political solution" (6,15). I argue Stowe suggests just the opposite.

rule of benevolence. Augustine St. Clare underscores this issue when he looks at his wife's behavior and declares, "Tell me of the lovely rule of woman! I never saw above a dozen women that wouldn't half kill a horse, or a servant, either, if they had their own way with them!--let alone a man" (LTC 302). For Stowe, political justice is not a question of sex or gender, but of conduct.

Stowe's sentimentalism was a reaction to the cold, patriarchal Calvinism of her youth but it was also an extension of that tradition. Like the Beecher family's revisions of Calvinist doctrine, Harriet Beecher Stowe's literary feminism is a revision and extension of active virtue. Stowe's sentimentalism is simply the explicit application of The Columbian Orator's social philosophy to the women's sphere, a possibility that the text's author, Caleb Bingham, hadn't envisioned. The ideal Stowe woman is capable, unfrivolous, heroic, and dominates the center of the household with her benevolence (Rourke 133). She speaks what her heart tells her, and most of all, she acts on her feelings. In 1797, the Orator codified the expression of spiritual duty for both men and women, but it hardly imagined the need for women to take up public action. After Northern politicians conceded to the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, Stowe realized that the obligation fell on her to do something about it.

Joan Hedrick's biography has helped to take Stowe out of the domestic paradigm in which she has recently been situated. For example, in contrast to Mary Kelley's portrait of women hesitant to play public roles, Hedrick pays attention to Stowe's oratorical training. As a teacher at Catherine Beecher's Hartford Seminary during its republican experiment in late 1829, Harriet engaged her students in the political business of petition

writing and rhetorical study, exercises which suited her own interests. She also began giving speeches to the student body. She wrote to Catherine, "I found my confidence growing so fast that I actually stood and looked in the eyes of all and "speechified" for nearly half an hour." In December, she wrote again, "I shall speak in the Hall again Monday. I feel now as if I could do anything." A few days later she gave a speech on "modes of exerting moral influence" and wrote to Catherine, "I shall become quite an orator if you do not come home soon" (Hedrick 59-63). Emulating the sermonizing habits of her male kinsmen, Stowe had the opportunity to experiment with public declamation in ways that might have been discouraged in a "promiscuous" environment.

Stowe's early prose bears evidence of her study of republican oratory, though, as Mary Kelly points out, she retreated from the "public" role of signing her early work under her own name. In Stowe's collection of her early writings, The Mayflower, the hero of "Love versus Law" is distinguished in his youth by being able to read fastest and loudest from The Columbian Orator (35). Another character, Miss Silence, boasts powers of public speech that rival those of Uncle Jaw. In "Uncle Tim," one of the most stylistically ambitious pieces of the collection, Stowe begins with mock oratory. The narrator, feigning Byronic import, begins by considering several different locales for a story. Greece and Italy come to mind but the narrator rejects them with the patriotic words, "No: let me turn to my own land--my own New England; the land of bright fires and strong hearts; the land of deeds and not words; the land of fruits and not flowers; the land oft spoken against, yet always respected..." (65). Stowe deflates the pretense of this passage with deft bathos, however, concluding,

... the latchet of whose shoes the nations of the earth are not worthy to unloose. Now from this very heroic apostrophe, you may suppose I have something very heroic to tell. By no means. It is merely a little introductory breeze of patriotism, such as occasionally brushes over every mind. (65)

While her parody of July 4th oratory gives way to a local color tale, Stowe resurrects a vocal technique when she addresses her readers' nostalgia with the phrases, "Do you see yonder brown house? You must have often noticed it...you recollect...you remember..." Stowe's manipulation of oral technique in this story is an appropriation and a revision of the masculine oratory she studied as a child.

In particular, Stowe's heroines speak their hearts. In "Cousin William," the heroine, Mary, is distinguished by a conscientious and forthright vocality. When she is unfairly embarrassed by her cousin, Mary's state of mind becomes "very heroic." Heroism, a keyword of Republican Motherhood, often colors Stowe's portraits of New England women, and it is a term she occasionally used to describe herself. In Pogonuc People, Nabby, the eldest daughter, has "inherited from her father a fair share of combativeness, which was always bubbling and boiling within her comely person at the idea of imaginary wrongs," and the youngest daughter, Dolly, "had a great store of latent heroism and felt herself quite capable of making a courageous defense of her father--and her heart swelled with a purpose to stand by him to the last gasp, no matter what came (116,107). One of the most interesting sketches from the Mayflower is "Feelings," where Stowe describes the childhood of a quiet, unloved boy who seems "out of time and place." Charles Foster has argued that Stowe refers to the feelings of neglect she experienced as a child (4-6). The story describes the boy's painful alienation from his peers. It concludes

after the boy has grown to a man, giving an inflamed speech to an astonished multitude. Blocked from a ministerial career by her sex, Stowe yearned for the freedom to speak in public. When describing her motives for writing Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe wrote, "the heroic element was strong in me, having come down by ordinary generation from a long line of Puritan ancestry, and just now it made me long to do something, I knew not what, to fight for my country, or to make some declamation on my own account" (qtd in Wilson, Patriotic 9). Stowe was evidently pleased with this description of herself because she repeats the very same words in Pogonuc People to describe Dolly's emotions when she listens to the Declaration of Independence during a July Fourth celebration (PP 199). When accused of libel by a minister who objected to a passage from Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe defiantly aligned herself with Cato in a Shakespearian epigraph she attached to one of her letters to the New York Observer,

I grant I am a woman--but withal  
A woman well reputed, Cato's daughter  
Think you I am no stronger than my sex  
Being so fathered. (Hedrick 229)

Although Stowe was conscious of transgressing the bounds of "True Womanhood" in her public wrangle over the affair, she defended herself on the grounds that "there are some occasions when a woman must and will be unladylike" (228). Part of the power of Stowe's conduct in this episode is her contention that extraordinary events demand extraordinary actions. Behind her facade of humility is a powerful righteousness.

Despite the influence masculinist oratory had on Stowe, she made concessions to the age in which she lived. Stowe submitted her abolition pieces to the Cincinnati Journal

and Christian Union anonymously for fear of public exposure (Hedrick 108). When she toured England after the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, Calvin Stowe spoke for her from the public rostrum. It would be a mistake to align Stowe with the same kind of radicalism Angelina Grimké practiced many years before her. But Stowe's moral obligation to speak, her patriotism, and even many aspects of her writing style, demonstrate the extent to which she was a participant in the field of public discourse generally reserved for the ministry.

Stowe's achievement in Uncle Tom's Cabin is to criticize the hypocrisies and violence of the slave system in the guise of a republican rhetor. Since the ground breaking work of Jane Tompkins, it is a commonplace to discuss Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin as part of the Other American Renaissance, a demonstration of the power of sentiment, and a critique of the cold and duplicitous realm of abstract debate. In short, Uncle Tom's Cabin is an argument for the triumph of love over reason, a drama with clearly gendered roles. While I largely accept the value of these characterizations, I would respond that Stowe's strategy is not simply to supplant cold logic with feminine sentiment. Rather, she seeks to unite reason and love in a Christian republic. For Stowe, feeling was not just a mother's virtue but a republican, and Christian, sensibility.

Within the framework of Christian republicanism, Stowe's illustrations of feeling are arguments. Her unspoken adversaries throughout Uncle Tom's Cabin are Daniel Webster and the national arguments on behalf of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. As Catherine O'Connell has remarked, the Bird family scene in Chapter 9 functions as a mis-en-abyme of the whole novel, where Stowe juxtaposes the realities of human suffering

against abstract argument. But another way of describing Stowe's strategy is Platonic: Stowe is presenting the difference between sophistry and moral argument. Senator Bird calmly justifies the logic of the Fugitive Slave Law, himself having recently voted for the passage of the law, while his wife responds with humanitarian benevolence (93). The Senator's assertion that he speaks for "public interest," while his wife argues on behalf of "private feeling," is deeply ironic, however, because it is actually his wife who speaks to disinterested public interest, not her husband. Rebutting her husband's assertion that hiding fugitive slaves is a "public evil," Mrs. Bird replies that "obeying God never brings on public evils." The actual issue is sophistry. In the face of her husband's "clear arguments" and "reason," Mrs. Bird responds, "I hate reasoning, John" (94). But she ably defends her own side, cutting through her husband's rhetoric with the question, "John-- would you, now, turn away a poor, shivering, hungry creature from your door, because he was a runaway?" Her husband, the narration informs us, is routed:

So he had recourse to the usual means of gaining time for such cases made and provided: he said, "ahem," and coughed several times, took out his pocket handkerchief, and began to wipe his glasses. Mrs. Bird, seeing the defenseless condition of the enemy's territory, had no more conscience than to push her advantage. (93)

When Mr. Bird weakly responds that it is "his duty" to return slaves to captivity, Mrs. Bird throws the word back into his face: "Duty, John! Don't use that word!" As the scene concludes, Mrs. Bird has refuted her husband's "clear reasons" at every turn with appeals to moral truth. More appealing than Mr. Bird's sophistical argument is Augustine St. Clare's clear reason for slavery: "We're in for it; we've got 'em, and mean to keep 'em.-- it's for our convenience and our interest [...] I think that will be intelligible to everybody,

everywhere” (201). St. Clare’s tone is playful but honest. Betraying Stowe’s New England preference for directness, St. Clare continues:

Now, when any one speaks up, like a man, and says slavery is necessary to us [ ] this is strong, clear, well-defined language; it has the respectability of truth to it; and if we may judge by their practice, the majority of the world will bear us out in it. But when he begins to put on a long face, and snuffle, and quote Scripture, I incline to think he is n’t much better than he should be” (202)

The weakness of Senator Bird’s arguments are also emphasized by the speech which precedes the scene: Sam’s dinner-table burlesque of political stump-oratory. The ironic execution of the scene is worthy of Mark Twain, for the satire cuts in every direction. Sam, a slave, emphasizes the keywords of Stowe’s argument, “conscience,” “principles,” and “persistence,” but he embodies none of them (88-90). Although Sam speaks on behalf of all these ideals, he is reality only helping himself to the kitchen larder, hammering his points home by thrusting turkey-legs and chicken necks to and fro. Sam speaks of disinterested “principles” but he is serving himself. Stowe’s main goal is to satire the pretensions of stump orators who tell the people what they want to hear to simply get elected. Sam declares, “I’ll stand up for yer rights.--I’ll fend ’em to the last breath,” as he piles more food on his own plate (88). Following this scene, Senator Bird’s fine Congressional rhetoric of “public interest” seems absurd.

The humor of this scene indicates the way Stowe’s rhetorical virtuosity operates on other levels as well. Her mission is not entirely to antagonize her readers, but also to appeal to them, and she does this at Sam’s expense (Yarborough “Strategies”). Sam’s imitation of demagogic political leadership ably points out the weaknesses of civic oratory.

The minstrel-like quality of his performance distances Stowe from her criticism of political oratory. She makes Sam an object of laughter among both pro-slavery and Abolition readers. This is more than just generating humor. In the end, Stowe's criticism of political hypocrisy gets blamed on the confused observations of a slave. This distance, however, is crucial to Stowe's persuasive strategies. She's trying to hold an audience of both southern and northern white readers.

One of the reasons Stowe's novel is so successful is her flattery of a large portion of her Southern reading public. Like Frederick Douglass's oratorical encomium on Virginia at the beginning of "The Heroic Slave," Stowe earns her opponents' good will before she attempts to persuade them of anything. Both the Shelbys and the St. Clares (excluding perhaps, Marie) provide models of Southern grace that most Northerners would envy. Stowe is careful to make the novel's first villain, Mr. Haley, a far more appealing character than the slave-catchers, Marks and Loker. By making Marks and Loker the most heartless characters of the first half of the novel, Stowe alienates a very small portion of her reading audience. Haley is a study in middle-class degeneration. His superficial concerns for his chattel peel back to reveal his utter callousness and religious hypocrisy. But Stowe even gives Haley an excuse--his disregard for humanitarian sympathy has been conditioned by seeing hundreds of families ripped apart.

Stowe's rhetorical techniques for eliciting readers' sympathy are often based on oral, if not oratorical, modes of address. When Senator Bird helps put Eliza on the underground railroad, Stowe apostrophes to her Southern readers,

And you need not exult over [Bird's failure to turn in Eliza] good brother

of the Southern States: for we have some inklings that many of you, under similar circumstances, would not do much better. We have reason to know, in Kentucky, as in Mississippi, are noble and generous hearts, to whom never was tale of suffering told in vain. Ah, good brother! Is it fair for you to expect of us services which your own brave, honorable heart would not allow you to render, were you in our place? (103)

Stowe's training in the "rhetoric of benevolence" is evident here in several ways. In terms of the content of the passage, Stowe is appealing to the benevolent instincts of her reader's hearts; her narrator "knows" that people in the south are generous.<sup>136</sup> If Senator Bird is a stand-in for Daniel Webster, Stowe flatters him by imputing to him a more generous heart than the New Hampshire senator vilified throughout the north. Stowe's narrative voice also performs that generosity of spirit itself, assuming kindred virtues in her audience. The rhetoric of the passage assumes public intimacy. It conveys the impression of a speaker addressing a group of like-minded people. The pages of the book fall away. Stowe turns to the sound of a human voice to reactivate the humanitarian impulses of her readers. In this sense, both Stowe's rhetorical style and her message reinforce each other.

Stowe's illustrations of benevolent conduct do not always have peaceful consequences, however. In the scene where George visits the tavern in disguise, he has the opportunity to try to convince his old friend, Wilson, of the propriety of his behavior. George's desperation is underscored by the "two pistols and a bowie-knife" he carries, symbols of pro-slavery violence in Abolitionist circles. Insisting that he'd die before being captured, George cites Revolutionary precedent to justify his course. Such violent

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<sup>136</sup> For a taxonomy of Stowe's narrative voice, see Warhol.

behavior seems at odds with the gentle posture Stowe's narrator usually adopts, but she transfers the narrator's role to George's interlocuter, Wilson

Mr. Wilson's mind was one of those that may not unaptly be represented by a bale of cotton,--downy, soft, benevolently fuzzy and confused. He really pitied George with all his heart, and had a sort of dim and cloudy perception of the style of feeling that agitated him, but he deemed it his duty to go on talking good to him, with infinite pertinacity (125, emphasis mine)

As Wilson gently tries to dissuade George from violence, however, George responds with an abolitionist sermon taken straight from Frederick Douglass:

See here, now, Mr. Wilson, [ ] look at me, now. Don't I sit before you, every way, just as much a man as you are? Look at my face,--look at my hands,--look at my body, [ ] why am I not a man, as much as anybody? (126)

George proceeds to tell Wilson of the breakup of his family, the sale of his mother, the rape of his sister, and the separation from his wife. George's appeal awakens Wilson's benevolent heroism and he explodes, shouting, "Blast 'em all!" As Catherine O'Connell points out, however, Stowe's advocacy of violence in the name of humanitarianism stops short of killing. When George shoots Loker it rather serves as the first step in persuading the slave-catcher of the moral worth of the Abolitionists' principles (409).

Stowe's embrace of the Declaration of Independence and 4th-of-July rhetoric in Uncle Tom's Cabin is thus not an attempt to "feminize" American political traditions but to recover their egalitarian, humanist and collectivist origins. George's "declaration of independence" to Tom Loker is terse and direct. He announces his identity, his claim to freedom, and his intention to defend himself and his family. Stowe doesn't let George's speech stand by itself, however. She speaks heroically to the reader, asking why we

shouldn't grant George the same rights as those we grant Kossuth. Stowe's multiplication of oratorical voices both intensifies the melodrama of the scene and combines her own voice with that of a black male.

Stowe's penchant for masculinist speechifying is also evident in the epigraph of Chapter 37, which begins with the climax of John Philpot Curran's speech on behalf of universal emancipation. Frederick Douglass had popularized the portion of the speech Stowe quotes upon his return from England in 1848, reciting it in a heavily theatricalized manner before American audiences. Stowe dwells upon this passage in the middle of her chapter:

Their night was now far spent, and the morning star of liberty rose before them. Liberty!--electric word! What is it? Is there anything more in it than a name.--a rhetorical flourish? Why, men and women of America, does your heart's blood thrill at that word, for which your fathers bled, and your braver mothers were willing that their noblest and best should die?  
(410)

Stowe's familiarity with the challenges of making a July 4th oration "new" is evident in this passage. Teasing her readers with the awareness that the discourse of "liberty" has been used so often as to be dull, Stowe recirculates an exhausted concept with new twists. By pointing out her own artifice, itself a standard trick, she extends the significance of Curran's encomium on liberty to the sacrifices of women. Not about to scant her own contributions to the battle against slavery, Stowe augments her own masculinist literary performance with the sacrifices of Revolutionary motherhood.

Among Stowe's finest appropriations of public oratory are the "Concluding Remarks" to Uncle Tom's Cabin. After four paragraphs of direct address to her readers,

northerners and southerners, men and women, she asks:

But, what can any individual do? Of that every individual can judge  
 There is one thing that every individual can do.--they can see to it that they  
feel right. An atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human  
 being, and the man or woman who feels strongly, healthily, and justly on  
 the great issues of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race  
 See, then, to your sympathies in this matter! Are they in harmony with the  
 sympathies of Christ? Or are they swayed and perverted by the sophistries  
 of worldly policy? (472)

Stowe's appeal to individual readers is primarily theological, rather than economic

Individuals are not measuring themselves against some vague inner whim, but against

Christ's example. It is testament to the proliferation of secular and liberal individualism in

our own age that this passage is often characterized as a retreat from collective action to

individual feeling. In Stowe's formulation, individual conscience is a necessary part of the

community of God and of social obligation. For Stowe, deep feeling, speaking, and action

go together; the "atmosphere of sympathetic influence," a concept with clearly

Edwardsian overtones, is the social matrix of benevolence. Although Stowe does not

provide a roadmap for political action against slavery, her radicalism is precisely in what

she doesn't say: resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law, the education of others, and the

principled opposition to slavery wherever possible. In this sense, her apparent advocacy

for "sentimentality" over "action" is a call to duty to her fellow evangelical republicans.

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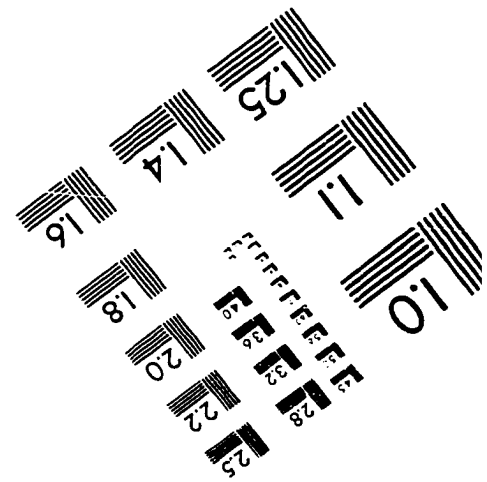
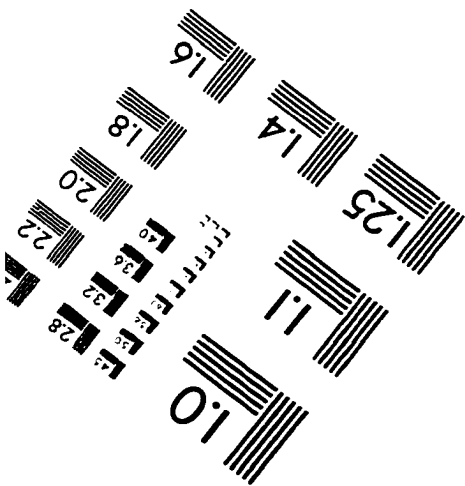
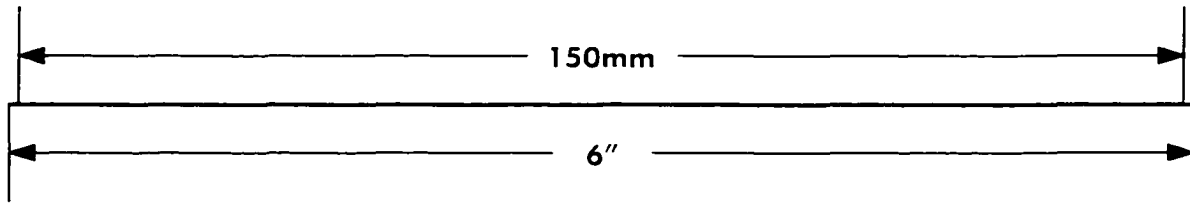
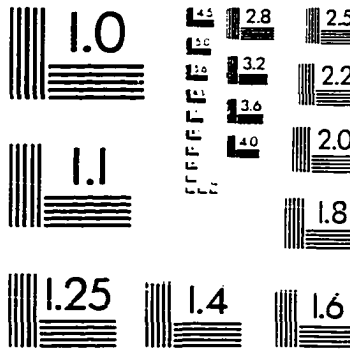
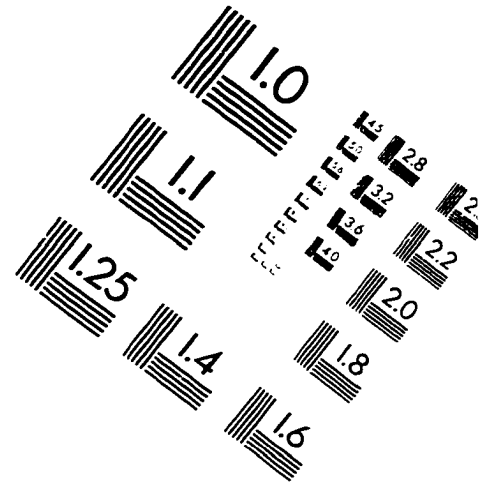
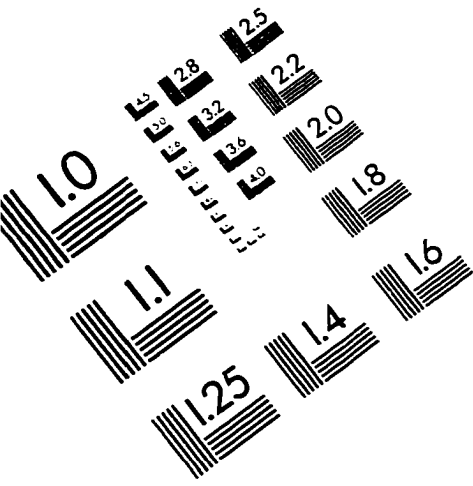
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