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Thinking with Rhetorical Figures: Performing Racial and Disciplinary Identities in Late-Nineteenth-Century America

Steven Mailloux

Thinkers will give an immortality to a people that neither wealth, nor industry, nor strength of arm, nor even virtue can procure for it.

W. S. Scarborough, *The Educated Negro and His Mission*

For practical benefit we are often about as much indebted to our enemies, as to our friends; as much to the men who hiss, as to those who applaud.... The Jim Crow minstrels have, in many cases, led the negro to the study of music; while the doubt cast upon the negro's tongue has sent him to the lexicon and grammar and to the study of Greek orators and orations.

Frederick Douglass, "Self-Made Men"

The first African-American member of the Modern Language Association had some difficulty attending the 1896 annual convention at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. William S. Scarborough later wrote of his experience: "I was refused accommodation at every leading hotel though I had brought my credentials as a member of the Association. I had letters from some of these same hotels asking my patronage. I was told the letters were simply sent to all members of the Association, not knowing my color, and they did not take colored guests. I had to undergo the humiliation and find an obscure room with scarcely a bowl and pitcher available" (qtd. in Ronnick, "William Sanders Scarborough" 1791). This was

neither the first nor the last time the distinguished educator and classical scholar found himself facing racist treatment outside a scholarly conference while being accepted and recognized inside its meeting halls. The previous year in the same city, Scarborough attended the annual convention of the American Philological Association (APA). On the second day, the session adjourned early so the participants could attend a reception at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Mather of Cleveland (“Proceedings 1895” xlii). At the dinner Milton W. Humphreys of the University of Virginia noticed that “Prof. Scarborough, the black negro from Wilberforce University, Ohio, was being entirely ignored by the negro waitress. The President and Vice-presidents happened to be standing in a group, and I called their attention to it, and they called Mather’s. Scarborough was at once given his supper and duly waited on.”¹

A few years later at a New Jersey Methodist resort, Scarborough and his companion, both lay delegates to the London Methodist Ecumenical Conference, were refused service at a soda fountain. Scarborough wrote immediately to the *New York Times*, protesting the discriminatory treatment and commenting on the contradiction between religious doctrine and segregation practices: “This may be religion, but it is not Christianity.” Writing in the third person, the author identified himself in the following way:

Prof. Scarborough ... a graduate of Oberlin College, is a professor of Greek and Latin at Wilberforce University, Xenia, Ohio, and Vice President of the same. He is the author of a Greek textbook and of several classical and philological essays.... He is also a member of the American Philological Association, the American Archaeological Association, the American Social and Political Science Associations, the American Folk-Lore, Spelling Reform, and Modern Language Associations, and is one of the Vice Presidents of the American Negro Academy.

Scarborough continued: “I mention these facts simply to give the reader an idea of the standing of the parties mentioned.... They represent the best type of the negro people—a type that merits some consideration and respect—whether they receive it or not” (“Religion” 6). With these words, Scarborough identified as a professional scholar and an African American, as part of a discipline and representative of a race. These identifications, their historical performances and interrelations, form my central theme throughout this essay.

Although Scarborough joined many professional organizations, he identified himself primarily as a classical scholar and participated most consistently in the APA.² Greek and, to a lesser extent, Roman culture were his scholarly interests. He worked on the texts in those

traditions and often thought with their greatest writers and orators. Through this thinking-in-public and his professional identification with scholarly disciplines, Scarborough performed his racial identity. Indeed, at certain moments in his career, he experienced his disciplinary identity as primary.

1. Identifying Representations

Here's a simple working definition: human identity is *interpreted being*. Identity, whether individual or collective, whether racial, sexual, generational, ethnic, national, or religious, whether homogeneous, hybrid, or conflicted—all identity is interpreted being. In what follows, I trace some rhetorical paths of thought traveled by African-American intellectuals as they perform their racial and disciplinary identities in the late nineteenth century. Three associates of Scarborough help me say more about human identity as interpreted being.

In his 1845 *Narrative*, Frederick Douglass wrote famously of his escape from slavery and the beginning of his long career as a race leader. At a crucial moment in his story, Douglass announces to his readers: “You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man” (60). The act of resistance so introduced led eventually to a new, free life in the North, where Douglass insisted on maintaining his first name, Frederick: “I must hold on to that, to preserve a sense of my identity” (92). Later, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, this Frederick Douglass was again and again identified as the Representative Man of his race.

At the beginning of the next century, one of the claimants for Douglass's role as Negro leader, Booker T. Washington, wrote of his own experience of emerging identity in *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (1901): As a young man, hearing some fellow mine workers talk of a “great school for coloured people somewhere in Virginia” (42), he became “on fire constantly with one ambition, and that was to go to Hampton [Normal and Agricultural Institute]” (43). Setting out with little money, he traveled by stagecoach and at the first stop was denied food and lodging by the white hotelkeeper. Washington commented: “This was my first experience in finding out what the colour of my skin meant” (47–48). “What the color of my skin meant”: not only did Washington interpret his marking in relation to who he was, but he also interpreted the color of his skin through other people's interpretations. Identity as interpreted being.

This gloss on Washington's self-recognition echoes one of the most influential identitarian statements within African-American thought: that of W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903),

where the author describes the “American world—a world which yields [the Negro] no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (364). Du Bois’s claim about “double-consciousness” is a claim about the complicated nature of the interpretations feeding into the performance of identity as interpreted being. Scarborough’s contradictory experience of racial discrimination and professional recognition stands as one illustration of this complexity.

Certain antirace theorists question the performativity of identity. They argue that identity is what you are, not what you do, and that actions can thus represent your identity but not perform it. In this view, doing can signify being but not constitute it. Identity can’t be a social construction because identity is an essence or it is nothing.³ In contrast, I am arguing that identity—in this case racial and professional identity—can indeed be performed, rhetorically and hermeneutically performed. Identity is the being you are interpreted as by yourself or by others, including how you interpret others as interpreting you (a form of double-consciousness) and how others accept or reject your self-identifications by, for example, reading your inherited character through your physical appearance (“what the colour of my skin meant”).

Working with this notion of identity, we can turn to examples of performed identity by African-American intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century. I am especially interested in describing how rhetoric travels: how tropes, arguments, narrative fragments, and rhetorical traditions migrate from one community to another, evolve from one cultural moment to the next. Rhetorical hermeneutics tracks this movement of suasive, figurative, and narrative energies in time and space by doing reception histories, here the reception of Douglass as rhetor by African-American classicists and the development of racial and disciplinary identities accompanying this reception.⁴

2. Remarking Race and Discipline

In Douglass’s library at his death was a copy of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Representative Men: Seven Lectures* (1850). Besides Douglass’s name written on the inside cover, the only marking in this book is a wavy line in the margin next to a paragraph in the chapter on Plato. The section speaks of Plato’s historical reception, how his influence has “clapped copyright on the world.” “Plato would willingly have a Platonism.... It shall be the world passed

through the mind of Plato,—nothing less. Every atom shall have the Platonic tinge; every atom, every relation or quality ... elements, planet itself, laws of planet and of men, have passed through this man [Plato] as bread into his body, and become no longer bread, but body: so all this mammoth morsel has become Plato” (79). But in typically Emersonian fashion, there is resistance to such all-encompassing, universal explanations. And here’s the passage marked in Douglass’s copy: “But the mouthful [for Plato] proves too large. *Boa constrictor* has good will to eat it, but he is foiled.... In view of eternal nature, Plato turns out to be philosophical exertations” (emphasis in original). By this, Emerson simply means Nature escapes even the “power of genius”: Plato “argues on this side, and on that. The acutest German, the lovingest disciple, could never tell what Platonism was; indeed, admirable texts can be quoted on both sides of every great question from him” (80).⁵

I don’t want to make too much of this marked passage since we don’t really know who the marker was. Still, it allows me to highlight a few general points about Emerson’s *Representative Men* relevant to my interpretive arguments. First, thinking can be tracked at least partially through the historical receptions and appropriations of exemplary thinkers, of representative people. As Emerson puts it regarding the ancient Greek philosopher, “Out of Plato come all things that are still written and debated among men of thought.... The Bible of the learned for twenty-two hundred years, every brisk young man, who says in succession fine things to each reluctant generation ... is some reader of Plato, translating into the vernacular, wittily, his good things. Even the men of grander proportion suffer deduction from the misfortune (shall I say?) of coming after this exhausting generalizer” (43–44). These later debtors include some of Emerson’s own representative men in other areas than philosophy: Swedenborg in religion and Goethe in art. As Emerson says: “[T]he writings of Plato have preoccupied every school of learning, every lover of thought, every church, every poet,—*making it impossible to think, on certain levels, except through him*” (48; emphasis added). Not only does that phrase “on certain levels” leave some room for individual agency, but Emerson’s entire book (and his philosophy more generally) makes it clear that his representative men are to be ingeniously used rather than blindly followed. Indeed, the first chapter is entitled “The Uses of Great Men.” “Other men,” Emerson writes, “are lenses through which we read our own minds” (11). We might revise this slightly to say that representative men, ancient and modern, are the rhetorical lenses through which we read others as well as ourselves. Or, better, they are rhetorical figures with which we think identity in public and private.⁶

In *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (1887), William J. Simmons presented pictures and short biographies of

several noted African Americans of the 1880s.⁷ Simmons hoped to provide young men and women with a usable past in which they might take pride as well as with role models against which they might measure themselves. His accounts of these marked men of distinction began with “old man eloquent” (Simmons 123, 472), Frederick Douglass. By the time of the book’s publication, Douglass was generally acknowledged the leader of his race, its chief spokesperson and greatest orator. His status as his people’s Representative Man can be seen in the writings of other African Americans sketched in *Men of Mark*, including Scarborough, Washington, Alexander Crummell, and James Gregory.

Another of these marked men was Richard T. Greener, in 1870, the first African-American graduate from Harvard. As a sophomore, Greener took the Boylston Prize for Oratory and as a senior was awarded the First Bowdoin Prize for his dissertation on the land rights of Irish peasants. One newspaper predicted that Greener would someday gain the “title of a first-class elocutionist and rhetorician.”⁸ In 1873 Greener accepted an appointment as Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at the University of South Carolina, a post he held until 1877 when the state legislature closed the university and reorganized higher education along segregated lines. While at South Carolina, Greener also assisted in teaching Latin and Greek and was elected in 1875 to the APA, the first African American so honored (“Proceedings 1875” 8).

On 5 April 1880, Greener delivered a speech in Washington, DC. I use this lecture, “Socrates as Teacher,” to illustrate how some African-American intellectuals thought with classical rhetorical figures, how they appropriated supposedly conservative cultural traditions for reformist politics.⁹ I then show how these rhetorical resources in the Greco-Roman tradition get redeployed to perform racial identities, as they are simultaneously used in the reception of Douglass in the 1880s and 1890s.

In “Socrates as a Teacher,” Greener praises the ancient Greek iconoclast as the founder of moral philosophy and a powerful intellectual leader. Taking up the anti-Sophist line of traditional Platonism, Greener pictures his hero as the skillful opponent of those “professional talkers” who were “not overburdened with conscience nor hampered by strictest regard for truth. Notoriety and applause of men they loved, and then, as now, there was a sufficient force in the loadstone of money to draw them to any side” (9). They are the masters of rhetoric and oratory who can argue any thesis, for or against. “‘Man is the measure of all things,’ says one . . . ‘There are no eternal, immutable principles of Right, Truth, and Justice. These are only relative terms; whatever standard each nation—nay each individual—may put upon them—a matter of pure conventional usage—must be

accepted' ” (8). But Socrates taught differently. He too used words. Indeed, he used words with the best of his contemporaries. The young men of Athens “whom nothing could tame would stand transfixed and awed by this wonderful street preacher, whose solemn thrill of words his hearers could only compare with the roll of the direful drums and the clashing of cymbals in the worship of the Eleusinian mysteries” (22). But Socrates was no sophistic relativist, “no mere quibbler. He believed certainly and implicitly in the immutability of moral truth” (35).

Greener compares Socrates to modern reformers. “Because he was far in advance of his time and way ahead of his age, the popular clamor against him [became] a tumultuous yell for vengeance against any one who did not swear allegiance to its dogmas.... Mob violence led Wm. Lloyd Garrison through the streets of Boston with a rope about his neck because, with a lofty intrepidity, he dared assert: ‘the Fatherhood of Good and the Brotherhood of mankind.’ And later still, in the same Boston Parker and Phillips were denounced, threatened and mobbed, because they refused to bow down and worship the brazen calf which slavery had set up” (58–59). Greener praises this “amiable persistence, this assertive stubbornness of the truly great” (59–60).

And in Socrates this greatness is most manifest in “the history of his accusation, trial and condemnation” (60). Greener significantly observes, “In the simplicity, directness of the original Greek it stands unrivaled and unapproachable,” except, he notes, in the 1859 episode of John Brown, “when a gray-haired hero, wounded in body but whole of heart, from the squalid Court House of Charleston, Virginia, made that memorable speech to a slave-holding court” (61). And then in moving to his conclusion, Greener asks his audience: “[L]et us think for a moment how intolerant even modern thought is to differences of opinion on creed, politics, and race” (64).

In his speech, Greener thought with the rhetorical figure of Socrates about the contemporary political scene, and other African-American intellectuals developed this thinking further. I can use Greener’s passing reference to the original Greek of the Socratic histories to elaborate this point. In 1888, the year following the publication of Simmons’s biographical collection, another of his marked men noted the measure that had been used to gauge the humanity of African Americans throughout the century. In his speech “The Race-Problem in America,” Alexander Crummell recalled:

[W]hen I was a boy of 13 [in the 1830s], I heard the utterance fresh from the lips of the great J. C. Calhoun, to wit, that if he could find a Negro who knew the Greek syntax he would then

believe that the Negro was a human being and should be treated as a man.

If he were living to-day [1888] he would come across scores of Negroes, not only versed in the Greek syntax, but doctors, lawyers, college students, clergymen, some learned professors, and *one* the author of a new Greek Grammar. (Crummell, "Race-Problem" 172, emphasis in original)¹⁰

Crummell refers here to W. S. Scarborough, the figure with which I began. Before becoming professor of Latin and Greek at Wilberforce, where he later served as president, Scarborough more than met Calhoun's challenge and wrote a widely adopted grammar, *First Lessons in Greek* (1881). Greener praised this book in a journal review and in private correspondence with its author, and Scarborough gave a personally inscribed copy to Douglass, with whom he worked in various political campaigns.¹¹ In 1882 Scarborough joined Greener as one of the first African Americans to be elected a member of the APA, two years before Scarborough became a member of the MLA ("Proceedings 1882" iv).

In 1886 Scarborough wrote an article on the "Hon. Frederick Douglass" for the *Cleveland Gazette*:

As an orator Mr. Douglass has no superior. Age has not dimmed his intellect nor paralyzed his tongue. A veritable Pylvian Nestor, from whose lips flow words sweeter than honey, he has justly earned the title of "old man eloquent," and in listening, one is inclined to believe that the prophecy which old Homer put into the mouth of the blue-eyed goddess, Pallas Athena, when she says to Telemachus: "In part thy mind will prompt thy speech; in part/A God will put the words into thy mouth," has descended in some mysterious manner as a legacy to him. (1)

In such a manner, Scarborough continually interwove his classical rhetoric with his political activism. Douglass praised his colleague's April 1884 speech, "Our Political Status," in which Scarborough compares the Democratic Party to "Ulysses with the Giant Polyphemus" as "it caresses and cajoles the poor colored man until it has made him drunk with wine, then it commits its terrible crimes."¹² But in this presidential election year, Douglass and Scarborough were part of a losing cause as Grover Cleveland defeated James G. Blaine, in the first Democratic victory since the Civil War. Four years later, a Douglass–Scarborough collaboration helped return the Republicans to the White House as they combined

forces to publish "Address to Colored Citizens," supporting the ticket (Weisenburger 42).

Not only did Scarborough's classical vocabulary mark his political writings, but his political commitments also directly and indirectly affected his classical scholarship. Critics from the cultural right and certain rogue theorists have gleefully attacked leftist cultural studies for its claims to be politically efficacious, noting that talk about politics is not the same as doing politics. For rhetoricians, however, the distinction between talking and doing is not quite so clear. Be that as it may, the scholarship and activism of Scarborough historically demonstrates a rhetorical, contingent connection if not a logical, necessary connection between academic interpretation and political identity formation. In Scarborough's interpretation of Aristophanes's *Birds*, political categories influence scholarly practices¹³; in other cases, professional performances impinge on racial politics. For example, as a member of the APA, Scarborough read papers at several annual meetings, covering a wide range of classical topics from word usage in Demosthenes and Thucydides to fatalism in Homer and Vergil. But the invitation to the 1892 meeting was special because of the conference site: the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. This was the first APA meeting to be held so far south. Scarborough later wrote that the choice of this Southern venue would have made him "apprehensive" (*Autobiography* 120), and he probably would not have attended, except that a professor of the host university immediately sought him out and expressed a desire that he participate. He agreed to do so and was placed on the program to read a paper, "The Chronological Order of Plato's Works," which he later described as an attempt "to prove the order in point of time of Plato's writings by the Greek used by him and by the circumstances that surrounded him at the time of writing" (*Autobiography* 121).

It is the circumstances surrounding Scarborough at the time of speaking that I wish to note. He delivered his paper in the Rotunda Library, modeled after the Roman Pantheon, and he most likely walked by the copy of Raphael's *School of Athens*, covering a wall in the library annex and picturing Aristotle and Plato arguing at its center. In the Rotunda, Scarborough was introduced and looked out over the audience. He describes the scene: "The white aristocracy of the city turned out in large numbers. There was hardly standing room. On the walls hung the portraits of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Southern Confederacy, Gen. Robert E. Lee of the Confederate Army and other prominent Southern generals" (*Autobiography* 121). Of his performance, Scarborough writes:

The feeling that came over me was a strange one, as I stepped forward to present my paper. Every eye was fixed upon me and

The scholarship and activism of Scarborough historically demonstrates a rhetorical, contingent connection if not a logical, necessary connection between academic interpretation and political identity formation.

a peculiar hush seemed to pervade the room. It was a rare moment. Like a flash the past unrolled before my mind—my early Atlanta examinations, Calhoun’s famous challenge, that no Negro could learn Greek. For a moment I felt embarrassed as I faced my audience aware too that they must experience a peculiar feeling at the situation—a Negro member of that learned body standing in intellectual manhood among equals and where no Negro had ever been allowed even to enter, save as a servant—a Negro to discuss the writings of a Greek philosopher. I even fancied for a second that Jefferson Davis’ portrait looked down upon me with an amazed, perplexed, questioning gaze, if not a horrified one (*Autobiography* 121).

Scarborough quickly recovered his poise, delivered his paper, and received “universal hearty applause” (*Autobiography* 121). He later heard more compliments on his success: “I am sure no one would criticize me for being elated over the accomplishment—a victory for myself and for the race” (*Autobiography* 121).

Here the rhetorical performance not only evokes earlier intellectual accomplishments (learning Greek) but is itself a specifically disciplinary achievement with wider political implications. Again and again, Scarborough points to such achievements as personal and collective accomplishments: “I felt myself and race honored” (83). Thus, a disciplinary forum for speaking (a professional conference) became an opportunity for establishing individual agency and developing communal identity, a chance to challenge past racist exclusions in the larger white society and to model future possibilities for the present black community. This rhetorical practice in a profession not only participated in specialized discussions in an academic field but simultaneously functioned as an ongoing exemplary practice intervening in wider debates over educational policy (industrial training versus liberal arts education) and racial representation (literary and political). As an academic turned public intellectual, Scarborough often intervened directly in these cultural conversations beyond the academy. Scarborough’s speeches and articles on “The Negro Problem” extended and reinforced his various scholarly performances. He wrote and spoke about “The Negro Element in Fiction” in both scholarly and lay venues, and he praised the artistic accomplishments of African Americans such as the painter Henry O. Tanner for proving the abilities of the race.¹⁴ Scarborough’s own professional accomplishments were again and again cited by others as evidence of African Americans’ intellectual potential, and Scarborough argued unceasingly for liberal arts education so that their potential could be fully realized.

3. With Pen and Voice

In 1893 Scarborough was asked to introduce James Gregory's book, *Frederick Douglass, the Orator*. Scarborough compares Douglass to Themistocles, Pericles, and Demosthenes. He emphasizes through battle metaphors the material power of Douglass's rhetorical effects and supplements Cicero's advocacy of conscious rhetorical craft with his own romantic focus on the immaterial source of these effects: "[E]loquence is a spontaneous outburst of the human soul" (Introduction 9). "The scathing invectives and fiery eloquence of Mr. Douglass were the inevitable outcome of a soul longing for freedom in all that the term implies, not only for himself but for an oppressed race" (10). Demosthenes may have been the culmination of "political eloquence in Greece" and noble certainly was his ambition "to revive and restore the generous sentiments of patriotism and public spirit" (10). But, Scarborough declares, "Laudable as was this ambition, it was no more laudable than that which actuated Frederick Douglass during all the years of his active life. . . . Day and night he pleaded for freedom, for citizenship, for equality of rights, for justice, for humanity" (10–11). Scarborough concludes by comparing Douglass to Lincoln, Grant, Sumner, Phillips, Garrison, Blaine, and "other advocates of freedom" (11). "In point of ability and all the virtues that go to make up a well rounded citizenship Mr. Douglass compares well with them all—the only difference being that they represent white America and he black America" (11).

Scarborough thus introduces the book on Douglass by James M. Gregory, Professor of Latin Language and Literature at Howard University and another of Simmons's men of mark. Gregory prefaces his rhetorical commentary: "The main purpose of this book is one of usefulness," to become "instrumental in leading our youth to study the character of this remarkable man and to draw from it lessons that will urge them to high and noble effort" (Gregory 13). In praising his subject's rhetorical abilities, Gregory quotes Cicero—"The best orator is he that so speaks as to instruct, to delight, and to move the mind of his hearers"—and writes, "Mr. Douglass is a striking example of this definition. Few men equal him in his power over an audience. He possesses wit and pathos, two qualities which characterized Cicero and which, in the opinion of the rhetorician Quintilian, gave the Roman orator great advantage over Demosthenes" (Gregory 89).

In the rhetorical commentaries by Scarborough and Gregory, we see how these African-American intellectuals thought Douglass as Representative Man, thought black leadership, in rhetorically classical terms. Such thinking-in-public partly constituted Douglass's reception as a rhetorical figure while simultaneously functioning as an example of African-American scholars performing racial identity.

The historical complexity of how racial and disciplinary identities interacted can be seen in how Scarborough's lived experience of professional identification sometimes transcended the effects of the pervasive racism of his historical period. He wrote of his first APA meeting in 1884: "It had opened to me a new world of thought and endeavor. There I began lasting friendships with men high in university circles, who ever after made me feel that I was one of their number, and who not only gave courteous attention, but with no hint of prejudice" (*Autobiography* 83; cf. 266–67). Still, Scarborough's disciplinary accomplishments were always closely tied, perpetually framed, by racism, and they became a significant way that he again and again performed his racial identity. Late in life he lamented the lack of interest in classical studies among younger African Americans, and he regretted that even those very few who joined the APA had failed to present papers before the professional association, thus missing many opportunities "to bring race recognition" (*Autobiography* 84).

Scarborough's disciplinary identity as a classical philologist also formed part of his identification as an educator, and his status as a recognized leader in higher education gave him a certain stature in contributing, as he often did, to the debates over African-American education. Scarborough and other black intellectuals viewed those debates to be about what their race had been, what it currently was, and what it could become. It was for them a struggle over racial self-representation. Controversies over industrial training versus liberal arts education (stereotypically: Washington's view versus Du Bois's) were certainly about the practical distribution of material resources in and for the black community.¹⁵ But the cultural rhetoric of these debates was also about how the African American could be thought, what the "Race Problem" meant to the nation, and which forms of African-American identity could be used by its citizens, both white and black.

Scarborough expressed deep satisfaction with his disciplinary identification throughout his long career. Of course, he experienced disappointment and frustration too, not only because of racial prejudice in the larger society but also because of the inevitable disagreements within the black community about how to respond to such prejudice. Did a career in education as a classical philologist really contribute in a significant way to African-American progress? When asking himself this question, Scarborough found great comfort and support from such friends as Richard Greener, who wrote to him: "You may think you are doing little, but it is something worthwhile to have proved Calhoun's statement false, and by your philological success alone you have lifted us all out of the ditch where he proposed we should always lie." Against the opposition Scarborough faced from various quarters, Greener encouraged him to remember

the story in Plutarch's *Lives* about Aristides, whom jealous Athenians banished because he had "risen to extraordinary honors and distinction." Greener summed up Scarborough's work as a scholar and educator: "As I see you now at the head of a university I congratulate you on the path you have followed. You have not only held a solid course and fought valiantly with pen and voice for our civil rights, but you have upheld the educational side in a royal manner" (qtd. in Scarborough, *Autobiography* 321–22). We have, in our turn, followed the rhetorical paths of Scarborough, Greener, and other African-American intellectuals as they "with pen and voice" performed their disciplinary and racial identities.

Notes

1. Humphreys added: "Some of the officers made emphatic remarks on the fact that about the only Southern man among them should have been the one to look after the one negro" (Humphreys 829).

2. In 1869 the APA became the first of the many professionalized scholarly organizations founded in the US during the later nineteenth century (see Burton J. Bledstein's *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* [1976] 287–331). In what follows I posit a certain relative autonomy for academic disciplines in their development as disciplines and in the lived experience of their members, but that autonomy is never absolute, as I also show. On the relative autonomy of academic disciplinary practices, see Steven Mailloux, *Rhetorical Power* (1989) 20–22; and for more general discussions of disciplinarity, see Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice* (1990); David R. Shumway and Craig Dionne, eds., *Disciplining English: Alternative Histories, Critical Perspectives* (2002); Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente, eds., *Disciplinarity at the Fin de Siècle* (2002); Steven Mailloux, *Disciplinary Identities: Rhetorical Paths of English, Speech, and Composition* (2006). On the controversy over the racist origins of the discipline of classical philology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (1987); Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, eds., *Black Athena Revisited* (1996) 349–453; and Martin Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics* (2001) 165–248.

3. See, for example, Walter Benn Michaels, "Autobiography of an Ex-White Man: Why Race Is Not a Social Construction" (1998) and *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (1995). Michaels's logical, anti-identitarian critique of "race" differs from the strategic, political criticisms of the concept in Paul Gilroy's *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (2000) and in Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House* (1992), although Michaels notes a debt to Appiah's earlier essay, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race" (1986) (*Our America*, 176, no. 223; cf. Appiah, *Ethics of Identity* [2005] 137, 309, no. 42). Appiah's later definitions of *racial identity* (as a collective or social identity) are consistent with my working definition: he roughly defines such an identity as "a label, *R*, associated with *ascriptions* by most people (where ascription involves descriptive criteria for applying the label); and *identifications*

by those that fall under it (where identification implies a shaping role for the label in the intentional acts of the possessors, so that they sometimes act *as an R*), where there is a history of associating possessors of the label with an inherited racial essence (even if some who use the label no longer believe in racial essences)” (emphasis in original) (Appiah, “Race, Culture, Identity” 81–82; also see Appiah, *Ethics* 66–69).

4. My reception history is intentionally limited by this particular focus on Douglass and African-American academic intellectuals. These figures are representative in a special sense: they are typical of an African-American professional elite that achieved political agency partly through participation in newly professionalized disciplines, as those fields were being institutionalized within the American research university of the late nineteenth century. On the late-nineteenth-century emergence of the American research university, see Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (1962); and Laurence R. Vesey, *The Emergence of the American University* (1965). For more on rhetorical hermeneutics, see Steven Mailloux, *Rhetorical Power and Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics* (1998).

5. For assistance in locating Douglass’s copy of *Representative Men*, I am grateful to Catherine Ingram, Curator at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC, and Tyra Walker, Site Manager at the Museum Resource Center of the National Park Service, Glenn Dale, Maryland.

6. It would do here to dwell a bit on the gender specificity of these rhetorical figures. We can juxtapose Emerson’s uses of representative men from the classical tradition—Demosthenes, Plato, and Cicero—to a perhaps more complex and interesting appropriation of the classics by Margaret Fuller in her 1840s “Conversations,” where she reads Greco-Roman mythological figures allegorically to comment on human faculties and frailties. For example, see her interpretation of Mercury as god of eloquence and thieves (“Margaret said eloquence was a kind of thieving!”) and her wry yet sympathetic remark about the ugly young man who ridiculously tried to imitate a Raphael Mercury every time he was alone before a mirror (Healey 135–37). Fuller’s allegorical uses of classical mythology continued in her 1845 *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, in which she also used chattel slavery to figure and challenge the constricted roles of women in the antebellum public sphere. That same year, Fuller wrote a review of Douglass’s *Narrative* for the *New-York Daily Tribune* (10 June 1845). In *Reception Histories* (75–102), I rhetorically analyze this review but place it only in the context of the “Bible Politics” of slavery and not in relation to either classical thought or the women’s rights movement. On the performance and reception of Douglass’s embodied rhetoric in relation to nineteenth-century traditions of classical rhetoric and philosophy, see Steven Mailloux, “Re-Marking Slave Bodies: Rhetoric as Production and Reception,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35 (2002): 101–13.

7. The explicitly gendered marking of the volume is further emphasized in Simmons’s dedication: “This volume is respectfully dedicated to the women of our race, and especially to the devoted, self-sacrificing mothers [w]ho moulded the lives of the subjects of these sketches, laboring and praying for their success. It is sent forth with the earnest hope that future mothers will be inspired to give special attention to the training of their children, and thereby fit them for honorable, happy and useful lives.” In his preface, Simmons expresses an unrealized hope to accompany the present volume “with a companion illustrating what our women have done.” On African-American women during this period who traveled rhetorical

paths parallel to and sometimes intersecting with those of the men I discuss in this essay, see S. Elizabeth Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark" (*A.M.E. Church Review*, April 1892); and also Shirley Wilson Logan, "*We Are Coming*": *The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (1999); Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* (2000); and Susan Kates, *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education, 1885–1937* (2001).

8. Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, 12 and 13 August 1869, qtd. in Mounter 132.

9. For more general accounts of American political uses of the Greco-Roman tradition in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (1994); Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (1992); and Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910* (2002).

10. A more complete account of Calhoun's remark appears in "The Attitude of the American Mind Toward the Negro Intellect," Crummell's 1897 address before the American Negro Academy, which Crummell helped found. In the address he underlines the remark's representative significance: "Mr. Calhoun was then, as much as any other American, an exponent of the nation's mind upon this point" (207). Calhoun's challenge and the African-American scholar's response was a repeated refrain throughout the century among black intellectuals, both male and female; see Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South* (1892) 260–61, and Fannie Jackson Coppin's *Reminiscences of School Life, and Hints on Teaching* (1913) 19, 30. On Crummell's classical training at Cambridge and its "many lasting effects," see Moses 71–78.

11. In his review, Greener wrote appreciatively, "'What has he done?' says Emerson, 'is the divine question which searches men and transpires every false reputation. Pretension may sit still, but cannot act.' 'What have we done?' is the question for the race. Professor Scarborough in this modest volume of 147 pages, has *done* something, and merits the applause of the race" (qtd. in Scarborough, *Autobiography* 77). In my references to Scarborough's autobiography, I cite page numbers from Ronnick's edition of *The Autobiography of William Sanders Scarborough*. This edition is based on a typed copy of the text compiled and written by Scarborough's wife, Sarah C. B. Scarborough, and Bernice Sanders, who quote extensively from W. S. Scarborough's now lost autobiographical manuscript. This typescript copy of the Scarborough–Sanders text is in the William S. Scarborough Collection of the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus. In all subsequent references to Scarborough's autobiography, I only use passages that Sara Scarborough and Sanders identify as direct quotations from Scarborough's original manuscript. Ronnick's version, although extremely useful for its introduction and explanatory notes, does not make clear which passages from the Sara Scarborough and Sanders text were directly quoted from W. S. Scarborough's original. All quoted passages have, therefore, been checked against a microfilm copy of the typescript at the Ohio Historical Society. For a detailed account of the textual history, see Ronnick's introduction, 19–20.

12. Scarborough, "Our Political Status," 11. For Douglass's praise, see his letter, "Prof. W. S. Scarborough—Hon. Fred Douglass," published in the *Cleveland Gazette*, 21 June 1884.

13. Scarborough, *The Birds* 17–19; *Autobiography* 95, 189. I'd like to thank Scott McMillin of Oberlin College, Scarborough's alma mater, for providing me with a copy of Scarborough's treatise on *The Birds*; the booklet was a gift to the college from its author.
14. Scarborough, "The Negro Element in Fiction" (*Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 1890), "Henry Ossian Tanner" (*The Southern Workman*, December 1902), *Autobiography* 119. Also see Scarborough's articles on literary authors of African descent: "Alexandre Dumas" (*The Southern Workman*, July 1903) and "Alexander Sergeivitch Pushkin" (*The Southern Workman*, March/April 1904).
15. On the much discussed African-American debate over higher education at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Jacqueline M. Moore, who provides a basic introduction, documents, and a bibliographical essay in *Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (2003). For most of his career, Scarborough managed to stay on good terms with both sides in the Washington–Du Bois controversy, although he spent the most time advocating the value of a liberal arts education and especially the place of classical study within it; see, for example, Scarborough, "Booker T. Washington and His Work" (*Education*, January 1900), "The Negro and Higher Learning" (*The Forum*, May 1902), and *The Educated Negro and His Mission* (1903).

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