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Re-Marking Slave Bodies: Rhetoric as Production and Reception

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There is much talk nowadays about the double nature of rhetoric: rhetoric as a practical guide for composing and rhetoric as a theoretical stance for interpreting. The two uses can be viewed as complementary, as flip sides of the same holistic approach to rhetorical studies. But they can also appear in conflict: production models of writing and speaking versus reception models of reading and listening; models for inventing rhetoric versus models for analyzing it. Indeed, though the two models can be mutually supportive, they have often developed in tension within the evolution of academic disciplines over the last 125 years. Different emphases on one or the other model have resulted in different departmentalized disciplines and varied divisions within those departments, as we are all so well aware. One might even claim that advocating one or the other model has contributed significantly to the fragmentation of rhetoric as an interdiscipline during the last century and to the distribution of its parts into various academic units. In many English departments, for example, the continuing divisions between literature and composition faculty arise from contrasting professional interests in reception models focused on interpreting literary works versus production models focused on composing student texts. A similar reception/production antagonism appears in the history of speech departments separating from English departments. In 1915, when seventeen teachers of public address broke off from the National Council of Teachers of English, the production (oratory or debate) model they favored was at odds with the reception (philological or hermeneutic) model of most literature faculty.[1]

I don't mean to suggest that different choices between models of production and reception fully account for the academic fragmentation of rhetorical study. Nevertheless, practical antitheses do constitute disciplin-

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ary identities. Antitheses between production and reception—between writing/speaking, on the one hand, and reading/listening, on the other—have variously combined with other distinctions between written texts versus oral performances as objects of study and between scientific research versus humanistic scholarship as intellectual traditions, and these assorted configurations of interpretive practices and institutional formations did help shape disciplinary identities throughout the past century. We are now faced with a situation in which rhetoric is distributed across several departments and programs, not in an integrated interdiscipline but as disciplinary fragments, where rhetorical critics in literary and cultural studies, for example, don't read deeply either in the work of rhetoric/ composition faculty in their own departments or the rhetorical scholarship produced in other departments such as communications or classics.

Historically, I believe, the separation of written rhetoric (literature and composition) from oral rhetoric (public address and debate) within the academic humanities, this separation of English and speech departments, has been just as debilitating for rhetorical study as the literature/composition split within English departments alone. One might speculate about how these divisions encouraged the eventual exclusion of oratory from British and U. S. literary canons. More important, these divisions have resulted in a fragmented disciplinary approach to everything having to do with tropes, arguments, and narratives in culture, including most recently the study of local and global communication networks, old and new literacies, and past and present media revolutions.

In the present essay I suggest an alternative to this disciplinary fragmentation of rhetoric. This alternative, call it rhetorical hermeneutics, learns from the more holistic approach to language arts found at the elementary and secondary levels of our U. S. educational system, where writing, speaking, reading, and listening (and sometimes viewing) are practices often taught in relation to one another.[2] Here production and reception models form parts of the same integrated framework for understanding and participating in the cultural conversations of diverse public spheres. In the following sections, I address these issues of model selection first by considering the objection that rhetorical hermeneutics is exclusively a method of reading and not a heuristic for writing. Then I move to an example of rhetorical hermeneutics in practice: a reception study of rhetorical productions (printed texts and oral performances) within the antebellum U. S. debate over domestic slavery. I do not claim that my treatment of this historical controversy solves all the problems of the disciplinary divisions I

have outlined, or even that rhetorical hermeneutics is anything more than a reception-oriented take on production. I offer the example primarily to foster further discussion among disciplinarily isolated rhetoricians in light of their continuing use of competing rhetorical models. The key here is a focus on tracking paths of thought through public performances, their rhetorical production and reception.

1. Production and reception

Let me begin with some working definitions: Rhetoric deals with effects. Rhetoric deals with textual effects, persuasive and tropological. By "texts" I simply mean objects of interpretive attention, whether speech, writing, nonlinguistic practices, or human artifacts of any kind. A production or performance model of rhetoric gives advice to rhetors concerning probable future effects on their intended audiences. In contrast (or is it?), a hermeneutic or reception model provides tools for interpreting the rhetorical effects of past or present discourses and other practices and products. Both of these models are employed in cultural rhetoric study, which is first of all an interpretive project; it attempts to establish meanings and values for texts and their results, analyzing the effects of cultural performances in general and language use in particular. It is a specific rhetorical form of that heterogeneous movement currently known as cultural studies.[3] It uses the vocabulary and other resources of classical and postmodern rhetorics and attempts to link up institutionally with composition, literacy studies, histories of rhetoric, and rhetoric of inquiry, as well as relating to fields such as critical theory, cultural anthropology, intellectual history, technology studies, and material histories of the book.[4]

In order to build questions of power into this form of rhetorical analysis from the beginning, I define "cultural rhetoric" as the political effectivity of trope, argument, and narrative in culture. Using this definition encourages a practical and theoretical preoccupation with making sense of the political dynamics of cultural conversations at specific historical moments. It places power/knowledge relations near the center of any proposed rhetorical rethinking of the human sciences. One strategic reason for this placement is to conceptualize various emerging interdisciplinary projects as core knowledges for teachers and students rather than as marginal add-

ons to a traditional humanistic education: to promote the study of language-use in relation to the intersection of such interpretive categories as nationality, race, class, generation, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender.[5]

Rhetorical hermeneutics is a version of cultural rhetoric studies that focuses on the tropes, arguments, and narratives constituting the interpretations of texts at specific times and places. To elaborate, I will take up one recent objection to rhetorical hermeneutics: the charge that it is just that, a rhetorical *hermeneutic* or analytic frame, and not a performance heuristic or productive art. For example, Arabella Lyon's *Intentions: Negotiated, Contested, and Ignored* argues that this theory collapses rhetoric into hermeneutics and in so doing "deletes the rhetorical tradition of textual production." More specifically, she claims that my

> interest in studying historically based arguments ultimately evades the rhetorical tradition of teaching individuals "the available means of persuasion." If the rhetorical theorist is always the observer or interpreter of rhetorical exchanges, the observations are of text and cultural effect, how a text is interpreted, and not the traditional rhetorical observations of what the rhetor can do to *produce* a desired effect, a specific action. (71)

Though more positive toward rhetorical hermeneutics, Rosa Eberly in *Citizen Critics: Literary Public Spheres* implies a reservation similar to Lyon's. She writes that my rhetorical hermeneutics is like what she has in mind "as a critical method, based as it is on rhetorical practices in historical context." She too wants "to situate the foundations of meaning within rhetorical exchanges; in addition, however, [her] 'thick rhetorical analysis of interpretation' [Mailloux 1989, 17] . . . depends upon a view of citizen critics as active participants in the inventions and judgments of literary public spheres and . . . on rhetoric as a productive (rather than merely an analytical or a hermeneutic) art" (Eberly 34 n. 8).

I completely agree with Lyon and Eberly on the importance of promoting rhetorical theories that are productive as well as analytical; but not surprisingly, perhaps, I disagree with them that my rhetorical hermeneutics doesn't fill that bill. Rhetorical hermeneutics includes tools both for interpreting texts and for producing them, for describing how texts are established as meaningful through rhetorical exchanges and for providing rhetorical strategies enabling participation in such exchanges, whether disciplinary or larger cultural conversations. The more productive side of rhetorical hermeneutics develops through a few heuristic slogans. Rhetorical hermeneutics is the *use of rhetoric to practice theory by doing history*. For

example, you might use a rhetorical vocabulary to practice hermeneutic theory by doing reception histories: describing how a student essay, a literary work, or a political speech is understood, evaluated, and utilized at a specific time and place and claiming that such a reception study stands simultaneously as an instance of historical practice *and* of hermeneutic theory. This is to claim that the only hermeneutic theory passing rhetorical muster in the present antifoundationalist moment involves persuasive descriptions of historical acts of interpretation. Whatever one thinks of such claims, rhetorical hermeneutics does try to provide strategies for participating in disciplinary debates over the nature of interpretation, foundationalist theory, and the relation of history and politics to both; at the same time it presents case studies of particular acts of historical reception, examining for instance, how the Concord Public Library banned *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* within the 1885 debates over "The Bad Boy Boom" or how Margaret Fuller read Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* within 1845 "Bible Politics."[6]

Another way of putting these claims is to say that rhetorical hermeneutics is the *intersection of cultural rhetoric study and rhetorical pragmatism*. It provides interpretive strategies as a productive art for participating in both the disciplinary game of historical practice and the interdisciplinary game of critical theory. In the former, it borrows from historical versions of cultural studies with a rhetorical twist and analyzes contextualized acts of reception (an example of one kind of cultural rhetoric study); and in the latter, the theory game, it provides a position (I call it rhetorical pragmatism) from which to argue issues of interpretation, history, politics, identity, agency, and other active topics in the current shape of the game.[7]

But those disciplinary and interdisciplinary games are primarily academic ones within the university. So one might say that rhetorical hermeneutics promotes a productive art only for doing analyses within professionalized, academic debates. What Eberly and many others call for is a productive rhetorical art useful in wider, nonacademic public spheres. Professional politics is not real politics, one might complain. Or put less contentiously, talking about rhetorical politics within an academic, professional conversation is separate from doing politics outside the academy.[8] This issue deserves more consideration than I can give it here, but perhaps it is not too difficult to see that historical reception studies could provide useful resources for contemporary public-sphere arguments. There is noth-

ing to prevent using rhetorical hermeneutics to analyze cultural and political matters beyond the academy in the present as well as the past.[9]

Rather than pursue this issue, however, I now turn to an extended example of using rhetorical hermeneutics to illustrate one way of bridging the gap between production and reception models of rhetoric. Just as interpretation has two complementary sides, so too does rhetorical study. We talk of "doing an interpretation" of a poem and can mean either saying a poem aloud as a performance or reading a poem by establishing its meaning through an interpretive argument. In order to do the former, something like the latter in embryo must also be accomplished either before or during the public performance. Similarly, though rhetoric can be an art for producing a text, using it first to analyze past texts or present rhetorical situations can help the current production take place successfully. Conversely, a rhetorical study might focus on the reception of a particular performance. That is, not only does rhetorical production involve reception, but reception study concentrates on how productions are received. Thus, production and reception are not radically separate but complementary events, with one enabling the other or one becoming the other's concern or topic.

2. Rhetorical articulations

In the 1890s Frederick Douglass wrote about his early years as an abolitionist lecturer: "I hardly need say to those who know me, that writing for the public eye never came quite as easily to me as speaking to the public ear." True enough perhaps, but the tropes used in this memory might remind us that Douglass's antebellum speaking performances actually combined public visibility with oral effectiveness. Arguing against slavery and for his race, Douglass found that his original audiences required a double rhetorical display.

> In the earlier days of my freedom, I was called upon to expose the direful nature of the slave system, by telling my own experience while a slave, and to do what I could thereby to make slavery odious and thus to hasten the day of emancipation. (1892, 511)

This call for narrated words exposing "the direful nature" of slavery was followed by a plea for another kind of display:

> I was called upon to expose even my stripes, and with many misgivings obeyed the summons and tried thus to do my whole duty in this my first public work. (Douglass 1892, 512)

Douglass's early performances thus involved both talking about his lived experience and exposing his bodily markings, both the words and the marks constituting his abolitionist rhetoric. That rhetoric involved suasive and tropological forces in its performance, which combined to testify about and protest against the systemic evils of slavery. Douglass's individual narrative was a persuasive synecdoche for the whole story of Southern chattel slavery, and his marked body was simultaneously symbolic representation, concrete evidence, and a material effect of that story's events.

I can use the reception of Douglass's embodied rhetoric, Douglass as marked man in the public sphere, to begin my sampling of rhetorical hermeneutics. Here rhetorical hermeneutics uses reception study to track the rhetorical paths of thought in public and private spheres. By placing the "rhetorical paths of thought" as the object of my inquiry, I mean to emphasize the way rhetoric is both the means and the topic of interventions at various cultural sites. In this essay, for example, I track some rhetorical paths of thought through the reception of classical texts from the Greco-Roman tradition and their selective combination with fragments of Christian biblical discourse, beginning and ending with Douglass's rhetorical performances, situating those performances within tropings and arguings as well as allusions and embodiments of available rhetorical traditions in the nineteenth century.

After his escape from slavery, Frederick Douglass became a well-known lecture agent for William Lloyd Garrison's Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in the early 1840s. He was at first introduced as a "graduate from the peculiar institution . . . *with my diploma written on my back*" (Douglass 1855, 359). Douglass entered into a public sphere where slavery was a topic of heated debate during the "Golden Age of American Oratory," the last historical period in which classical Greco-Roman traditions provided substantial public resources for understanding and discussing rhetorical practice, educational policy, and political theory in the United States.[10] From his earliest appearances on the lecture platform, Douglass's rhetorical power was compared to that of the greatest orators of his day. In 1842 a reporter for the *Salem Register* enthused:

> The most wonderful performance of the evening was the address of Frederick Douglass, himself a slave only four years ago! . . . Fluent, graceful, eloquent,

> shrewd, sarcastic, he was without making any allowances, a fine specimen of an orator. He seemed to move the audience at his will, and they at times would hang upon his lips with staring eyes and open mouths, as eager to catch every word, as any "sea of upturned faces" that ever rolled at the feet of Everett or Webster to revel in their classic eloquence.[11]

These producers of "classic eloquence," Daniel Webster and Edward Everett, were trained in classical traditions of Greco-Roman rhetoric, whereas Douglass initially learned his art through experiences of Southern Christian preaching and repeated readings of Caleb Bingham's *Columbian Orator*.[12] Douglass's 1845 *Narrative* and his later autobiographies describe how he was inspired by the antislavery dialogues and freedom speeches in *The Columbian Orator*, which also included extracts from Plato, Cicero, and other classical writers. Indeed, one selection, "Part of Cicero's Oration Against Catiline," includes the suggestive line: "Let every man's sentiments with regard to the public be inscribed on his forehead" (132). Many years later Douglass would cite these Ciceronian orations. But for the young Douglass it was John Aikin's dialogue between a slave and his master (240–42) that most marked his memory, and not "Socrates' Defence before his Accusers and Judges" or "Cato's Speech before the Roman Senate" (122–25, 48–49).[13]

In Bingham's theoretical treatise introducing the collection, Douglass could find many classical references, with quotations on delivery from Demosthenes and Cicero in the very first paragraph. But this rhetorical treatise is an example much less of neoclassicism than of the elocutionary movement. That is, Bingham's introduction follows other elocutionary texts of his day and reduces rhetorical instruction to delivery involving only gesture and voice, pretty much ignoring invention, arrangement, and other parts of classical rhetoric. We might speculate that this reduction of the classical tradition served Douglass and other African-Americans well as they used rhetoric to gain an embodied voice within the antebellum public sphere and its debates over slavery. The elocutionary focus on delivery, on the aural and visible, on voice and gesture, thematized the body in rhetorical theory and emphasized it in practice as it was simultaneously being figured as central to the intersectional debates over abolition.[14] Douglass's rhetoric was especially effective in presenting vivid accounts of marked slave bodies even as his own impressive appearance and skillful delivery, his performing body, contradicted racist expectations about black slave capacities.

For some audiences, these racist expectations derived from pro-slavery ideologies that appropriated classical thought in defense of Southern

political and economic institutions. If Aristotle's *Rhetoric* formed, at least indirectly, a part of the educational resources for Northern antislavery rhetorical practices, detailed elaborations of Aristotle's *Politics* and its theory of natural slaves directly served the interests of Southern defenders of the "peculiar institution."[15] But the Southern racialization of slavery went well beyond Aristotle's essentialist argument that some men are natural slaves when proslavery ideologues ignored the somewhat indeterminate relation Aristotle posited between the slave's soul and a particular body type. Aristotle noted that sometimes a freeman's soul was present in a slave body and that, vice versa, a slave soul might end up in a freeman's body. For the Southern slaveholder, in contrast, Negro body type guaranteed natural slave essence. Furthermore, Southern appropriations of Aristotle's natural slave theory transformed his distinction between Greek freemen and barbarian slaves, a geopolitical opposition, into a biologically marked racial distinction between Caucasian and Negro.[16]

We find both of these racialized extensions of Aristotle's theory in an 1850 *Southern Literary Messenger* article by George Frederick Holmes, past chair of classical languages at Richmond College and later professor of history and literature at Virginia. In "Observations on a Passage in the Politics of Aristotle Relative to Slavery," Holmes argues that if the Bible does not prohibit slavery then we are left to an examination of history to establish the nature and justice of the institution. Turning to history, Holmes finds that the "universality" of slavery "proves the institution to be natural" as Aristotle asserted (1850, 197). Holmes's racializing transformation of Aristotle's theory begins when he suggests that "the importance of paying strict attention to the characteristics of different races seems to have been constantly present to the minds of the Greeks, however erroneous at times may have [been] their application of the great principle." His corrective then follows: In applying the "great principle" in his reading of history, Holmes finds that "the distinction between the Caucasian and the Negro is a palpably specific difference, and all history teaches us that it has been attended with an equally wide and palpable difference of functions." He claims: "The virtues of the Negro are the virtues of Slavery, and become vices when his condition is changed. The virtues of the Caucasian unfit him for Slavery." Indeed, for Holmes, "it is equally clear that since the commencement of the historic age the torch of human advancement has been exclusively in the hands of the Indo-Germanic races." Thus, he concludes this section of the article, "Enough has been said to justify the position, if not the application, of Aristotle: that 'nature has clearly designed

some for freedom and some for slavery—to whom slavery is both just and beneficial'" (1850, 200). Holmes's entire treatment of history, remember, is framed by what his interpretation of the Christian Bible will allow, and part of that interpretation is his use of Paul's epistles to justify his proslavery position. In fact, he quotes Paul's first letter to Timothy to connect fanatical abolitionists with bad rhetoric, with "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth," with a pride that knows nothing while "doting about questions and strifes of words."[17]

Like Holmes, other proslavery advocates easily combined fragments of classical and Christian texts to make their cases. This ideological articulation was accomplished through inventive reweavings of trope, argument, and narrative from philosophical and religious sources cited to prove the divinely ordained slave nature of Africans.[18] Markings of soul and body signaled the natural inferiority of black slaves in both classical and Christian traditions, according to slavery's Southern defenders. Writing out of the Old Testament, they cited not only the ownership of slaves by the patriarchs but also the dark color of Ham as an early racial marking prefiguring the bodily appearance of their own black slaves: through Noah's curse God decreed that Ham's son Canaan and his descendants would be slaves to his brothers and their progeny.[19] Such visual indexes of slave inferiority were easily linked to Aristotle's theory through the use of antebellum editions, commentaries, and English translations of the *Politics* that used the tropes of marking.

Holmes (1850, 193) translates from the conclusion of *Politics*, book I, chapter 5: "Nature has clearly designed some men for freedom and others for slavery:—and with respect to the latter, slavery is both just and beneficial" (1255a1–3). Readers of other antebellum translations could find restatements of Aristotle's point rendered as "from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for the purpose of obeying, and others for ruling" (1853, 11; *Politics* 1254a23–24). In the same translation, the passage ignored by Southern proslavery interpreters appears as: "it is the intention of nature to make the bodies of slaves and freemen different from each other, that the one should be robust for their necessary purposes, but the others erect; useless indeed for such servile labours, but fit for civil life; . . . though the contrary often takes place, namely, that the one have the bodies, but the others have the souls, of free citizens" (1853, 13; *Politics* 1254b27–34). The marking metaphorics continued in the commentaries on these passages. For example, one commentator's 1855 note on *Politics* 1254b responds to an objection that "The animals differ from man in outward form, [but] the

slave and the freeman his master do not so differ" by explaining: "It is the tendency of nature, answers Aristotle, to do this, to mark a difference, but a tendency often defeated; as a practical fact we often see the very reverse the case" (Congreve 1855, 18). And the next note adds: "After weighing the objections [Aristotle] comes then decidedly to a conclusion in favour of slavery. 'There are some by nature free, others by nature slaves, and for these their state as slaves is both advantageous and just,' . . . The mental differences are sufficient, where nature has failed to mark the bodily" (18). Southern defenders of slavery ignored these passages in order to apply Aristotle's natural slave theory without distracting qualifications, but as they changed the argument they preserved the tropes.

These writers celebrated the fact that nature clearly did mark racial inferiority on slave bodies in the Southern case. The 1849 second edition of Thomas Dew's *Essay on Slavery* occasioned Holmes's later elaborations of Aristotle's theory; and early in his text, Dew, once president of the College of William and Mary, remarks that "Aristotle, the greatest philosopher of antiquity, and a man of as capacious mind as the world ever produced, was a warm advocate of slavery—maintaining that it was reasonable, necessary and natural" (1832, 16). Transferring this warmth to his own rhetoric, Dew argues that slavery, far from being "unfavorable to a republican spirit," actually encouraged it, at least among those who were not enslaved. "In the ancient republics of Greece and Rome, where the spirit of liberty glowed with most intensity, the slaves were more numerous than the freemen. Aristotle, and the great men of antiquity, believed slavery necessary to keep alive the spirit of freedom" (112). What slavery accomplished for Greek citizens, says Dew, the same institution accomplishes for whites in the South. "Color alone is here the badge of distinction, the true mark of aristocracy, and all who are white are equal in spite of the variety of occupation" (113). Color marks the superiority of the master, the inferiority of the slave. Whites are thus reminded of their equal privilege as freedom-loving citizens, while blacks are ever conscious of their irredeemably degraded state. Even slave manumission makes no difference: "the emancipated black carries a mark which no time can erase; he forever wears the indelible symbol of his inferior condition; *the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots*" (103).

Earlier than Holmes, another reader of Dews on Aristotle more elaborately carried out this colorization of the ancient philosopher's natural slave theory. Judge A. P. Upshur glosses Dew's text on "the true mark of aristocracy" by commenting that it helped prove "that negro slavery tends to inspire in the white man a strong love of freedom, to give him a high estimate

of its value, and to inspire him with those feelings of independence, self respect and proper pride, which fit him for the enjoyment of free institutions, and teach him how to preserve them" (1839, 679). Expanding on this ideological self-interest in the Southern version of slavery, Upshur notes that "the utility, and indeed the necessity of some outward and visible mark of distinction, between the slave and the free man, has been felt by most, if not all nations, among whom domestic slavery has existed." When no natural mark existed, it was invented (distinctive clothes, length of hair). "If there be any advantage in such a distinction," Upshur continues, "it is doubly advantageous when established by nature. There is then no reason [for slaves? for anyone?] to complain of the master's injustice, or to tax him with cruelty. The slave regards his degradation as the fiat of God; as an evil not brought upon him by the tyranny of his master, and from which no effort of his own can relieve him" (679 n). Just as emphatically as Dew, Upshur argues for the unchanging degraded nature of the latter's condition: "Even freedom is scarcely a blessing to him, for the eternal brand is upon his face—his caste is irrevocably fixed—and although he may cease to acknowledge a master, he can never cease to belong to the lowest class of mankind" (686).

In his conclusion, turning to Aristotle explicitly, Upshur compares the contemporary scene to that of the ancient Greeks, whose "slaves were for the most part captives in war, and white men like themselves. There was no natural brand, by which the eye could at a glance distinguish them from their masters." In Aristotle's day, the government needed to make up for this invisibility of distinctiveness and for the real possibility of slave intellectual equality by possessing "a degree of power formidable to liberty, and exert[ing] a discipline offensive to its principles." But because of innate inferiority signaled by outward marks, Southern domestic slaves offered no such danger. "Our safety is in the *color* of the slave; in an eternal, ineffaceable distinction of nature. With us, there is no magic in the word *manumitto*, which transmutes the slave into the free citizen." No essential transformation can really take place, whatever legal change occurs. The black slave's "caste is everlasting, and whether bond or free, he is the negro still. This he knows and feels continually. It gives him a habit of obedience and submission, not easy to be broken, and it teaches him not to put his own safety to hazard for objects which Nature herself has placed forever beyond his reach" (687)

When slaves or their abolitionist supporters ignored the natural marks of color aristocracy, slavery's advocates were quick to combine the marked essentialism in their Aristotle with the moral dictates in their Bible.

Proslavery writers linked the classical to the Christian, Aristotle to Paul. "We are told that slavery is at war with the spirit of Christianity," writes one Southerner in 1845. "If so, then the abolitionists must believe that the Apostle Paul, who was one of the most eloquent and efficient advocates of Christianity that ever lived, was more ignorant of its spirit than themselves." The writer goes on to quote Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh" and then follows this up in the very next paragraph with references to secular sources including histories of Greece and Rome: "The philosopher, Aristotle, one of the wisest of the ancients, was a zealous advocate of slavery. The inflexible Roman patriot, Cato, was a large slave-holder" (Hunter 1845, 462). Earlier, Dew had also cited Ephesians 6:5 and other passages from Paul's epistles, claiming they "most convincingly prove, that slavery in the Roman world was nowhere charged as a fault or crime upon the holder, and everywhere is the most implicit obedience enjoined" on the slave.[20]

Another proslavery writer articulating classical and Christian thought was the author of *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society*. In the mid-eighteen fifties Holmes wrote at least three enthusiastic reviews of this book, in which George Fitzhugh used notions similar to those of Aristotle to argue his strong views on slavery—though he claimed to have come to these notions himself before reading Aristotle's *Politics*.[21] In *Sociology for the South*, Fitzhugh combines scriptural quotations, including the usual ones from Paul's Epistles (102–04), with appeals to Greek and Roman societies as authoritative precedents for the political and cultural value of slavery (242–44). After reading Holmes's reviews, Fitzhugh explicitly adopted the natural slave theory of Aristotle to develop further his defense of slavery as the best available form of social organization (Fitzhugh 1857a, xi–xii; 1857b). There is much to say about Fitzhugh's appropriation of classical thought, not the least of which is that he so strongly believed in the political effectiveness of slavery as a social system that he argued for its extension to whites as well as blacks. In an odd way, then, Fitzhugh agreed more with the Aristotelian notion of natural slaves than did Holmes or the other Southerners I have cited, for he claimed that naturally inferior persons of any race should be enslaved for the betterment of all citizens. But this partial deracializing of slavery in theory did nothing to mitigate Fitzhugh's racism in practice. In a later article his love of paradox brought him to declare that "the white race is the best and the true slave race" (1858, 661) because whites are essentially more capable of being "permanently tamed, domesticated, or civilized," like pure blooded

horses and unlike Pawnee Indians and Bengal tigers, whose essential and ineradicable animal wildness prevent them from being good slaves. The Greeks and Romans always chose their slaves from the white races. "Mules and negroes," he goes on, "are an intermediate case" because they "can only be *half* tamed, domesticated, civilized, and enslaved" (1858, 661–63).[22]

Strangely, however, Fitzhugh was concerned about the reception of his first book by at least one member of this inferior race. The ideological complexities of Fitzhugh's brand of Aristotelianism did not prevent his political rhetoric from arriving at the same conclusion as other proslavery ideologues regarding the desirability of freedom for African-Americans. This fact can be seen in a final example of marking: Fitzhugh was a distant cousin of Gerrit Smith, the wealthy abolitionist friend and supporter of Douglass, to whom Douglass dedicated his second autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom* in 1855, the year after the appearance of Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South.* During the period when these two books were published and were being reviewed, Fitzhugh and Smith entered into an intense but respectful correspondence over their diametrically opposed positions on slavery. They actually found some areas of political agreement; for example, both criticized the materialism of the North and the inconsistencies of the South. But what I want to note in their rhetorical exchanges is Fitzhugh's repeated question to Smith: "What says yr friend Douglass about my book?"[23] For it turns out that Fitzhugh sent to Douglass a personally inscribed copy of *Sociology for the South*, a volume still in Douglass's library at his death. There is only one passage marked in the body of this text, a penciled "x" and a line in the margin beside the final paragraph of chapter 26, which begins: "We think it would be both wise and humane to subject the free negroes in America to some modification of slavery." The paragraph goes on to argue that competition with whites was killing off the black freedmen. "They are neither so moral, so happy, nor half so well provided as the slaves." Therefore, Fitzhugh recommends, "Let them select their masters, and this would be another instance of slavery originating without violence or cruelty—another instance in which slavery would redress much greater evils than it occasioned" (1854, 212). Fitzhugh thus sent Douglass a personally inscribed argument that Douglass and his fellow freemen should be immediately and beneficently reenslaved.[24] Whether this pencil marking was made by Fitzhugh, Douglass, or some other reader, it certainly stands as testimony to one aspect of the reception of Fitzhugh's book in the context of Douglass's possible reading of it.

3. Production as reception, reception as production

Southern writers and orators articulated classical and Christian discourses to defend slavery, and then these performances became both targets and resources for abolitionist rhetors.[25] Douglass's speeches in the eighteen forties and fifties, for example, appropriated the cultural rhetoric of proslavery texts and turned it into a powerful embodiment of antislavery resistance. Here we can see how rhetoric travels: how tropes, arguments, narrative fragments, rhetorical traditions migrate from one community to another, evolve from one cultural moment to the next. Rhetorical hermeneutics tracks this movement of figural, suasory, and narrative energies in time and space by doing reception histories, in this case the reception by and of Douglass as abolitionist orator.[26]

One rhetorical path can be traced through Douglass's parodic imitation of Southern preaching in his own abolitionist performances. Douglass found advice for such mimicry in Bingham's introductory remarks to *The Columbian Orator* (Bingham 24). But Douglass did Bingham one better by showing how over-the-top performances could work in practice as he imitated not only the words but the looks and sounds of the ministers talking to their slave audiences. In one of his most popular speeches of the eighteen forties, Douglass skillfully mimicked Southern preachers, taking as his text Paul's admonition "Servants, obey your masters":

> You ought to obey your masters . . . because of your adaptation to your condition. . . In all relations that God has established, this mark of its wisdom is always manifest. . . You have hard hands, strong frames, robust constitutions, and black skins. Your masters and mistresses have soft hands, long slender fingers, delicate constitutions, and white skins. Now, servants, let me put to you a question. Whence these differences? "It is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes." . . . Oh! blessed is God, in providing one class of men to do the work, and the other to think. (Douglass 1846, 472)

The mark of God's wisdom is evident in the natural hierarchy that is visibly marked by the shape and color of slaves' and masters' bodies.

According to the receptions recorded in newspaper accounts, Douglass's mimicry successfully hit its intended target for his immediate audiences outside the South.[27] These parodic performances enabled Douglass's rhetoric to entertain and educate, ridicule and persuade. The reception of these performances helped Douglass establish the present re-

ality of the "skin aristocracy" that served as one basis for the peculiar institution of the South.[28] In the forties, Douglass's abolitionist allies especially encouraged him in this mimicry and in his powerful descriptions of slave bodies marked by the lash. Eventually, though, he moved beyond these rhetorical techniques to establish individual political agency through other kinds of performances, adopting interpretive strategies of ideological analysis that accompanied his growing independence and eventual break from his earlier Garrisonian allies.[29]

Years later near the end of his career, Douglass returned to some of the rhetorical paths of thought I have been tracing, but he took them in new directions. In the 1880s Douglass was hailed as "Old Man Eloquent," the most famous leader of his race and its most acclaimed orator. His picture and biography immediately follow the editor's in Reverend William J. Simmons's *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising*, published in 1887. That same year the seventy-year-old Frederick Douglass toured Europe and wrote in his diary during his stay in Greece:

> Today I took my last look at the Acropolis and stood for the first time on Areopagus and heard read Paul's famous address to the Athenians 18 hundred years ago. I tried to imagine the state of mind incited.[30]

Douglass is, of course, referring to Paul's celebrated speech in Athens chronicled in Acts of the Apostles. Paul stands up at the Areopagus and says, "Ye men of Athens, . . . As I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription 'To the Unknown God.' Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. God . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:22–26). Here we have Paul, a Greek-speaking Christian convert, a diasporic Jew and a Roman citizen, in the act of preaching to an Athenian audience, which includes Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Here we have the embodied rhetoric of early Christianity and the classical tradition confronting each other. Or rather, Paul's rhetoric performs *both* a confrontation and a consolidation, simultaneously.

That confrontation and consolidation continued throughout the rhetorical path of Paul's short- and long-term receptions, which include the chronicled time in Lystra where Paul was mistaken for Hermes, the Greek God of rhetoric and interpretation. "When the crowds saw what Paul had done [cured a lame man], they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, 'The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.' They

called Barnabas 'Zeus' and Paul 'Hermes,' because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:11–12). The extended reception of Paul's preaching continued not only through his rhetoric's interpretive history in Christian biblical exegesis, but also, as we have seen, in American defenses of domestic slavery, in Douglass's antebellum mimicry of Southern preachers, and in one imaginative reenactment on 19 March 1887 when Douglass listened intently to a reading of Paul's Athens speech.

The month before while touring southern Italy, Douglass wrote in his diary:

> The ground over which we went was full of Roman remains . . . The landing place of Paul, the tomb of Virgil, the house of Cicero . . . were shown us with many other objects. It was a day long to be remembered. That which interested me most was the fact that I was looking upon the country seen eighteen hundred years ago by the prisoner apostle on his way to Rome to answer for his religion. It somehow gave me a more vivid impression of the heroism of the man as I looked upon the grand ruins of the religion against which Paul dared to preach. These heathen Temples represent a religion as sincerely believed in as men now believe in the Christian religion, and Paul was an infidel to this heathen religion as much as Robert Ingersol is now to the Christian religion.[31]

Here we have an especially rich example of a rhetorical path of thought. Douglass thinks through both his religious experience and his tour of Greco-Roman intellectual and material geography by embodying them both in Paul's practices of preaching, Paul's rhetorical confrontations with Athenian philosophy and Roman religion.

After his return from Europe, Douglass revised his 1881 autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. In the new chapter on his tour, he described his visit to Rome, including the Forum where "Cicero poured out his burning eloquence against Catiline and against Antony, for which latter speech he lost his head" (Douglass 1892, 572). He also wrote of his intense gratification in extending his visit into Egypt and then Greece:

> to walk among the marble ruins of the Acropolis—to stand upon Mars Hill, where Paul preached—to ascend Lycabettus and overlook the plains of Marathon, the garden of Plato, and the rock where Demosthenes declaimed against the breezes of the sea. (587–88)

Douglass then reminds his reader of the distance he has traveled:

> To think that I, once a slave on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, was experiencing all this was well calculated to intensify my feeling of good fortune by reason of contrast, if nothing more. . . . Now I was enjoying what the wisest and best of the world have bestowed for the wisest and best to enjoy. (587)

How far he had traveled indeed. And so too had his rhetoric.

In this article, I have suggested only some of the highways and byways one might take in tracking the rhetorical paths of thought traversed by Douglass, his audiences, his allies and his opponents in the ideological wars over the racial marks of slavery. A more complete account of antebellum paths would, among other rhetorical matters, take up the intersection of gender and generation with race in the articulation of classical and Christian discourses on slavery. This intersection can be seen in polemical accounts of slave and slaveholder families, in depictions of marked slave bodies, and in the reception given performing bodies marked as different as they produced narratives and images, made accompanying arguments, or addressed exclusions from speaking in the public sphere due to these marked differences.[32] By encouraging a detailed tracking of these productions and receptions, I hope rhetorical hermeneutics can lead not only to a greater understanding of past cultural rhetorics but also to further discussions among rhetoricians using contrasting models of rhetoric in their present disciplinary work.

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Notes

1. For disciplinary histories, see the bibiographies in Goggin; on the fragmentation of rhetorical study in light of disciplinary histories, see the discussions in Mailloux (2000), Leff (2000), Keith (2000), Nystrand (2001), and Miller (2001).
2. See, for example, Ong (1998, vii).
3. See Berlin (1996) and Rosteck (1999) on the intersection of cultural and rhetorical studies. Also cf. Gilyard (1999).
4. Such a list is only meant to be suggestive of desirable institutional and intellectual linkages. Just as important, perhaps, is an inflection of cultural rhetoric study toward Foucauldian socio-political analyses. Cf. "Archaeology and the History of Ideas" (Foucault 1972, 135–40) and "Modifications" (Foucault 1985, 3–13).
5. For a more developed argument, see Mailloux (1998).
6. On the reception of *Huckleberry Finn*, see Mailloux (1989, 100–29); on Fuller reading Douglass, see Mailloux (1998, 75–102). On reception study more generally, see Machor and Goldstein (2001).
7. See Mailloux (1995 and 1999).
8. This is not Eberly's argument but something more like that of Stanley Fish (1995).

9. See the analysis of the ABM Treaty Congressional debates in Mailloux (1989, 170–81) and the briefer analysis of the controversy over the 2000 Presidential Election ballot counts in Mailloux (2002). More detailed examples can be found in Cain (1996) and Eberly (2000). Also relevant here is Leff (1997).

10. On the "oratorical culture" of the antebellum United States, see Ferguson (1984), Buell (1986, 137–65), Wills (1992), Clark and Halloran (1993), and Warren (1999).

11. *Salem Register* rpt. in the *Liberator*, 9 December 1842: 194 (Lampe 1998, 152–53).

12. On Webster's classical education at Dartmouth, see Foster (1929); on Everett, called "the Cicero of America," see Reid (1993). On Douglass's early rhetorical self-training, see Preston (1980), Lampe (1998), and Chesebrough (1998). Also, see Ganter (1997) and Watson (2001).

13. In his *Narrative*, Douglass picks out Aikin's dialogue (in Bingham 1827, 240–42) for special note, commenting that it and a speech on Catholic emancipation "enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery." The dialogue in particular taught Douglass "the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder" (Douglass 1845, 35). This last comment illustrates the rhetorical theory of "moral suasion" Douglass shared with his Garrisonian allies; see Adeleke (1998).

14. Besides delivery advice offered in elocutionary and neoclassical rhetorics, the emphasis on voice and gesture could also be found in other rhetorical traditions available to Douglass. Cf. Genovese's comment on antebellum Southern black preachers, who "had to communicate with more than words, if only because too often whites were listening. Even when whites were not listening, the tradition of indirection, necessary for survival under conditions of white domination, manifested itself as a way of life, not merely as a mask to be put on and dropped at will. Thus, the preachers relied heavily on tone, gesture, and rhythm" (Genovese 1974, 269).

15. Cf. Poster's claim that a full account has yet to be written of the direct influence of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on the early nineteenth century (Poster 2001).

16. U. S. slavery advocates were not original in their biologically racialized readings of Aristotle's theory but built on a developing tradition of similar interpretations. As Ivan Hannaford (1996) puts it, "although Aristotle recognized important points of difference between the Greeks and the barbarians, . . . he did not ascribe these differences to race [or] physiognomy . . . in the sense that we understand those terms today" (57); but passages in the *Politics* "have been vigorously massaged since the sixteenth century by writers to infer a racialist disposition" (45). Besides Hannaford (1996) on the development of biological racism through modern receptions of Aristotle, see Davis (1966), Campbell (1974), and Smedley (1993). For detailed accounts of Southern defenses of slavery, see Jenkins (1935), Fredrickson (1971), and Tise (1987).

17. 1 Timothy 6:1–5, quoted in Holmes (1850, 196). Also see Holmes's linking of Paul with Aristotle in support of slavery being both natural and just (Holmes 1855, 566).

18. Cf. Stuart Hall (1986) on articulation.

19. See, for example, "A Southron" (1838, 551),"Canaan Identified with the Ethiopian" (1842), and Robinson (1849). Also see Bourne (1845), who takes up the argument of "great numbers of pro-slavery people [who] contend that the negroes have descended from Canaan, the youngest son of Ham, who was cursed for his father's transgression, Gen. ix. 25–27, and that this curse was inflicted upon that race as his posterity"; in passing, Bourne notes: "As to the mark recorded in Gen. iv. 15, as having been put upon Cain, though some white people pretend it was the black color, the negroes retort that it was the white color" (24).

20. Dew (1832, 107). Dew cites Paul's Epistle to Philomen, Titus 2:9–10, and Colossians 3:22; and he quotes 1 Corinthians 7:20–21 and 1 Timothy 6:1–2.

21. See Wish (1962, 113–19) and Gillespie (1972, 172–77).

22. Later still, Fitzhugh's published views became even more racist (Fredrickson 1971, 69–70), as he came to express the opinion that "the negro is physically, morally, and intellectually a different being . . . from the white man, and must ever so remain" (Fitzhugh 1861, 447). Fitzhugh continued endorsing Aristotle's natural slave theory but now saw recent ethnology as correcting the ancient philosopher: "Aristotle was neither anatomist, physiologist, nor phrenologist; hence, he mistook varieties of the Caucasian race for distinct and inferior

races or species of the human family" (448). Ericson (2000, 211–12, n. 54) claims that Fitzhugh actually never intended his earlier views on white slavery to be taken seriously; but whatever Fitzhugh's intention, contemporaries such as Senator Charles Sumner took him at his word and gave him as a prime example of "a leading writer among Slave-Masters" who supported enslaving those "persons of obvious inferiority among the white race" (Sumner 1860, 2601).

23. Fitzhugh to Gerrit Smith, 30 August 1855, rpt. in Rideout (1980, 82).

24. *Sociology for the South* also included an appendix reprinting Fitzhugh's 1851 article, "What Shall Be Done with the Free Negroes?" to which, in an earlier letter to Smith, Fitzhugh referred as "my plea for wishing to enslave Fred Douglass—gentleman tho he be" (17 April 1851, rpt. in Rideout 1980, 71). For assistance in locating Douglass's copy of Fitzhugh's book, I'd like to thank Catherine Ingram, Curator at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, D.C., and Tyra Walker, Site Manager at the Museum Resource Center of the National Park Service, Glenn Dale, Maryland.

25. These rhetorical performances are, of course, part of a much longer reception history articulating classical and Christian traditions, a history well beyond the scope of the present essay; but see, for example, Cochrane (1957), Turner (1981), Kennedy (1983), Fox (1986), Pelikan (1993), Garnsey (1996), Kennedy (1999, 143–82).

26. Cf. Edward Said (1983) on "traveling theory." Also see David Theo Goldberg (1993) on "discursive counteraction" as resistance.

27. See Douglass (1979, 16–17, 151–54, 359–61, 404–07, 470–72); and Lampe (1998, 81, 104, 121, 123). For abolitionist readings of Paul's epistles challenging proslavery interpretations, see Grimké (1836, 14–15) and Smith (1837, 38–39, 46–48); and for an overview of such counter-readings, see Shanks (1931, 147–56).

28. "There was a skin aristocracy in America; no, not exactly the skin, it was the colour of the skin, that was the mark of distinction, or the brand of degradation," recorded the reporter of Douglass's 2 February 1847 speech in Coventry, England (Douglass 1982, 4). For a tracking of marking metaphors in later legal discourses on race, see Thomas (1999).

29. See James McCune Smith's introduction to Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*, especially his comment: "Yet, these [Garrisonian abolitionist] gentlemen, although proud of Frederick Douglass, failed to fathom, and bring out to the light of day, the highest qualities of his mind; the force of their own education stood in their own way: they did not delve into the mind of a colored man for capacities which the pride of race led them to believe to be restricted to their own Saxon blood. Bitter and vindictive sarcasm, irresistible mimicry, and a pathetic narrative of his own experiences of slavery, were the intellectual manifestations which they encouraged him to exhibit on the platform or in the lecture desk" (Douglass 1855, xxii).

30. Entry for 19 March 1887 (Douglass 1886–87, frame 35).

31. Entry for 2 February 1887 (Douglass 1886–87, frame 24). Robert G. Ingersoll, the well-known advocate of atheism, was a friend and political ally of Douglass (Douglass 1892, 461–62, 540).

32. See, for example, Fitzhugh's comparison of Aristotle to abolitionists on the family in *Cannibals All!* (1857, 289); Douglass's description of himself as a terrified child watching the whipping of his Aunt Hester (*Narrative* 1845, 16–17); and Sarah Grimké's critique of "the dogma of woman's inferiority" in Paul's epistles (1837, 241–450). For useful treatments of some of these intersectional topics, see Sanchez-Epler (1988), Yellin (1989), Yellin and Van Horne (1994), Wiegman (1995), Jeffrey (1998), Browne (1999), and Logan (1999, 1–43).

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