



**THE JOURNAL OF THE
TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION**

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THE TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

Spring 1984

Volume X

Number 1

THE JOURNAL OF THE
TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION
published by

The Tennessee Speech Communication Association

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A JUJU OF THEIR OWN: BLACK ARTS POETRY IN ORAL INTERPRETATION

Harriette Allen Insignares

A Juju of My Own

To make a Juju of my own
 For I was tired of strange ghosts
 Whose cool bones
 Lived on the green furnace of my blood
 Was always my destiny
 So she warned me--my grandmother,
 And now and now
 When I kindle again her small eyes with their quick
 lights
 Darting ancient love into my infancy
 And when I break through to her easy voice
 That voice like the pliant red clay she baked
 She sings the only lullaby she sang me

"Me no care fe Bakra whip
 Me no care fe fum-fum
 Come Juju come"

So I am fashioning this thing
 My own Juju
 Out of her life and our desire
 Out of an old black love
 I am baking my destiny to a lullaby--

"Me no care fe Bakra whip
 Me no care fe fum-fum
 Come Juju come . . ."

(Lebert Bethune)

The 1960s was a period of renewed interest in intellectual, political, and creative pursuits among Afro-Americans. This was inspired by the reaffirmation of African heritage and Pan Africanism as well as a rediscovery of the Harlem Renaissance through the Black Arts movement. The literature of the 1960s resulting from identification with Africa remains a center of controversy for critics, educators, and students. It grew out of a desire by Blacks to make a Juju of their own--a poetry defining them and defined by them.

One aspect of the controversy revolves around the question of whether this literature, especially the poetry, is suitable classroom content. This is a concern because Black Arts poetry is characterized by dialect, vulgarisms, profanity, emotionalism and epithet. It is an oral poetry, a performance poetry.

Nevertheless, in view of the fact that this poetry documents a highly significant phase in the history of the Afro-American community, and sheds light on trends in American society as a whole, it should be recognized as a part of the American literary heritage. More important, Black Arts poetry is the creative expression of a group of Americans motivated by the character and tenor of the American way of life.

It is precisely the oral and emotional qualities of Black Arts poetry that make it prime content for oral interpretation. Thomas Sanders and Walter Peek say "if you would seek to know a people, look to their poetry." They say,

It is there (in poetry) in the most intense, controlled but emotionally honest statements that the natural eloquence of the group reveals itself in unguarded expressions of unveiled needs and desires, provisions, aspirations and dreams.¹

Therefore, this presentation on "Oral Interpretation as Cultural Self-Expression and Cross Cultural Communication" will focus on Black Arts poetry as (1) oral poetry (2) performance art, (3) emotional truth and (4) kinetic poetry.

These areas will be explored from the perspective of "self-expression" and "cross-cultural communication" which are the concerns of this panel presentation.

Oral Poetry

Students of Black Arts poetry have recognized that it is fundamentally oral poetry. Its roots are found in African and Afro-American folk poetry.

From African tradition it inherited oral-centrism. Oral-centrism refers to the cultural predisposition to value spoken language as a formative life force.

Anthropologist Janheinz Jahn explains it in this way:

If there were no word, all forces would be frozen; there would be no procreation, no change, no life. The naming, the enunciation produces what is named. Naming is an incantation, a creative act. What we cannot conceive is unreal; it does not exist.²

Communications expert Arthur Smith concurs with Jahn when he says:

The word is productive and imperative, calling forth and commanding. Its power derives from the traditional emphasis on the spoken word in African society.³

Smith also points out that the "Western appreciation of the written word is not historically shared by Africans. . . .Africans maintained an expressive sense that manifested itself as life-force in dance, music, and speech." He concludes that "expression, therefore, is not the captive of the written word;the word is indeed the generative power of the community."⁴

The oral quality of Black Arts poetry is spawned by this carry-over from African tradition as it is seen in folk expression such as toast-telling, story-telling, sermons and music and in the definition of the role of the poet as a "carrier of the culture"--a leader, facilitator and philosopher who is responsible to the community.

Because Black Arts poetry is oral poetry, it came to the attention of the people, not through books or magazines, but through oral presentation in night clubs, church basements, and community centers as well as on street corners,

in parks and school gymnasiums. Often these performances were recorded and sold in the form of audio tapes and record albums. This public exposure contributed to the Black Arts poets' broad popular appeal and their status as heroic figures in their community.

Performance Art

The public, oral presentation of Black Arts poetry points to the next concern of this paper which is poetry as "performance art." The most interesting explanation I have found is by Black Arts poet Etheridge Knight who now lives in Memphis, Tennessee.

Knight explains poetry as "performance art" through his "Trinity" or the three P's--the poet, the poem and the people as seen in toast-telling. Bruce Jackson, an authority on Black oral tradition, says:

Learning toasts is not just a matter of learning a lot of words that happened to be metered and rhymed, but also of developing and learning a performing style.⁵

He says "it is not easy to deliver--without being boring--a poem of perhaps one hundred lines. No one listens much to a toast-teller who cannot act."⁶

Jackson explains that a performer-audience relationship or "cooperative creativity" always exists in toasts. In order to tell a toast, the teller must have an audience. Knight says "when he (the toast teller) starts telling his toast, someone in the audience will provide a stanza."⁷ This interplay and exchange go on throughout the toast. If there is a refrain, the entire audience

will join in, and they give support through answering the teller and clapping rhythmically to the beat.

Patricia Hill, in her dissertation, said that emphasis and style of the toast-teller and his audience determine the shape of the poem. Bruce Jackson affirms her statement by saying that "with written poetry the audience makes its 'judgment' after the fact; with folk poetry, the audience is part of the fact."⁸

If Black Arts poetry is basically oral and performance oriented, to what does this expression appeal? To answer that question, we must examine the third concern of this paper and that is poetry as "emotional truth."

Emotional Truth

"Emotional truth" refers to truth perceived through experience instead of logic. This is a carry-over from Africa as well. In his review of Jean Toomer's Cane, Montgomery Gregory says "Emotion is integral and a valid source of truth--a subjective higher truth."⁹

"Emotional truth" is not peculiar to African and Afro-American literature, although it probably receives greater emphasis in them. The Greek concept of empathy as physical and emotional identification with a character or situation in a play is very similar.

Ben Sidran, in his book Black Talk,¹⁰ says there is an "emotional truth" which goes beyond empirical meaning. It is often achieved through the artist's ability to fascinate or charm the audience, or what the Africans call nommo, rather than logic and argumentation.

Knight argues that the purpose of art is to appeal to feelings and give people a sense of themselves. These descriptions, though directed toward poetry, are basic to music. Ernest Borneman in his book Jazz says:

. . .while the whole European tradition strives for regularity. . . the African tradition aims at circumlocution rather than direct statement. The direct statement is considered crude and unimaginative; the veiling of all content in ever-changing paraphrase is considered the criterion of intelligence and personality.¹¹

Further on the subject of "emotional truth" there are two very important statements. One is by Black Arts poet Don L. Lee who explains the poetry of the movement in this way:

Black art, like African art, is perishable and is thus functional. For example, a Black poem is written not to be read and put aside, but to actually become a part of the giver and receiver. It must perform some function: move the emotions, become a part of the dance, or simply make one act. Whereas the work itself is perishable, the style and spirit of the creation are maintained and used and reused to produce new works . . . the people will help shape the art, and although the work may not be here forever, through the active participation of the people, its full meaning will be realized. . . . the people reflect the art and the art is the people.¹²

The second statement is by Marshall McLuhan who observes that persons in "oral centric" societies have a heightened sense of community as a result of their perception of time. As such they are more spontaneous and emotionally involved in communication than intellectually detached. These qualities lead to what is often described as emotionalism and sentimentality in black literature. Yet, contrary to this popular view, these qualities are justified by the nature and concept of African and Afro-American art.

Kinetic Poetry

Earlier, music was mentioned as a source of understanding Black Arts poetry. According to Knight and others, it holds the key to understanding where the message resides in this communication. The musical component that is central to black poetry is rhythm. If an oral interpreter expects to succeed in presenting this material, he/she must come to grips with the rhythm of a given piece.

It is rhythm in oral poetry that creates in the audience what Ezra Pound called "kinetic poetry." Kinetic poetry creates a motor or muscular response--an experience that is very physical. Pound said poetry could be divided into three categories: phanopoeia - poetry of the eye, logopoeia - poetry of the locomotor/muscular system, and melopoeia - poetry of the ear which carries the musical quality of the poem.

On the subject of rhythm Thomas Sanders says "the rhythm of a people's poetry indicates the nature of their responses to the rhythms of the world in which they live." Ben Sidran concurs that rhythmic assertion had always characterized black cultural assertion.

Sidran continues by explaining that the development of rhythmic freedom has generally preceded social freedom for the black American. He says

Thus, the time concept, as translated through musical rhythm, has affected the social situation of oral culture. . . rhythm is the expression of Black "cultural ego" inasmuch as it simultaneously asserts and preserves oral ontology.¹³

Patricia Hill identifies Etheridge Knight as a prototype of black poetic conscience. She says "moreover, Knight has created 'new forms and new values' . . . by using 'rhythm' as the controlling aesthetic principle."¹⁴

Raymond Williams in his book The Long Revolution says

. . . rhythm is a way of transmitting a description of experience, in such a way that the experience is recreated in the person receiving it, not merely as an abstraction, or an emotion but as a physical effect on the organism--on the blood, on the breathing, on the physical patterns of the brain.¹⁵

He continues by saying rhythm is a "means of transmitting our experiences in so powerful a way that the experience can be literally lived by others--it is more than metaphor; it is a physical experience as real as any other." Black Arts poetry, therefore, seeks to project emotional truth through manipulation of various rhythmic devices.

In order to approach the preparation of this poetry correctly, the oral interpreter must realize that it is generally not phanopoeia, or poetry for the eye. Because black poets have tried to transfer the oral quality to the written page, they have developed an "oral punctuation" to help the reader of a poem to get a sense of the poem as it would be said. As a result, Etheridge Knight calls his poetry "transcribed oral poetry." This oral punctuation affects the reader's perception of the rhythm of the poems. According to Louise Rosenblatt's essay "A Performing Art," the reader of Black Arts poetry performs the poem as the violinist performs the sonata.

Norman Stageberg expands this idea with his concept of "poetry as experience." Poetry is an experience that comes to life within the cooperative creativity of the poet, and the audience. Stageberg says "a poem 'means' much more than merely its central thought." He says the thought is but one of many parts which unify to produce a total experience, and it is the total experience which constitutes the "whole 'meaning' of a poem." He explains as follows:

When we read a poem something happens within us. The words on the page awaken a response. They bring to life a group of images, feelings, and thoughts. The nature of these is determined (a) by our own past experiences with the words, and (b) by our present mental and emotional

set. This response within us--the experience caused by the words--is the poem. A poem then is an interaction within a reader between the words of a poet and the total past experience and present set of the reader.¹⁶

Stageberg indicates as well that there is a poem within, the one just described above, and a poem without, which is the printed version. He says the printed poem is merely the stimulus for the real poem which is experienced within the reader or, in the case of Black Arts poetry, within the listener. Instead of a poem being completed by the poet and then disseminated to readers who examine it after the fact, Afro-American poems only become poems in the presence of an audience and with its participation in the creative process. The audience's critical approval is a part of the shape of the poem. This stance is not counter to Euro-American practices but instead, represents a difference in emphasis or point of rest on a continuum. It is a matter of perspective.

The notion of simultaneity in creativity is supported by Stageberg when he identifies a poem as a "time-experience":

A poem does not come, full-blown into being. It is, on the contrary, a cumulative experience in time. It is created in the mind part by part as we read a succession of words; and not until we reach the end of the poem does the experience become a completed whole, one in which all contributory impressions are fused into one total experience.¹⁷

The oral performance of poetry is also time-oriented. This concept, like "experience," "performance," and "the inner poem," points to common ground for unifying Afro-American poetry with traditional American poetry.

In conclusion, Richard Wright has said the writers' task is to "fuse and make articulate the experience of man, because their art possesses the cunning to steal into the inmost recesses of the human heart, because they can create the

myths and symbols that inspire faith in life. . . ."18

In like manner, James Baldwin states that "literature is the way to truth, therefore, to an integration of the spirit with itself."¹⁹ It is felt, therefore, that self-expression through the literary arts can promote cross cultural communication. As a result, oral interpretation can find an easy kinship with the oral-centric poetry of the Black Arts movement.

Notes

Dr. Harriette Allen Insignares is Associate Professor of Communication at Tennessee State University. She is a storyteller and Tennessee's Official State Poet. This article is the paper she presented at 1983 TSCA at Fall Creek Falls. It is taken from her dissertation which is titled "The African Continuum: Toward a Definition of Afro-American Poetry as the Basis for Incorporating Poetry of the Black Arts Movement into the Teaching of American Literature.

¹Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, Literature of the American Indian (New York: Glencoe Press, 1973), p. 103.

²Janheinz Jahn, Muntu: The New African Culture (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 134.

³Arthur L. Smith, ed. "Markings of an African Concept of Rhetoric," in Language, Communication and Rhetoric in Black America, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 370.

⁴Smith, pp. 364-365.

⁵Bruce Jackson, Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me: Narrative Poetry from Black Oral Tradition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 5.

⁶Jackson, p. 5.

⁷Patricia Hill, "The New Black Aesthetic as a Counter-poetics: The Poetry of Etheridge Knight," Diss. Stanford University, 1977, p. 28.

⁸Jackson, p. ix.

⁹Montgomery Gregory, "Review of Cane by Jean Toomer," Opportunity, December 1920, p. 374.

¹⁰Ben Sidran, "Introduction," Black Talk (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), pp. xiii, xiv.

¹¹Ernest Borneman, "The Roots of Jazz," in Jazz, eds. Nat Hentoff and Albert McCarthy (New York: Rinehart, 1957), p. 17.

¹²Don L. Lee, Dynamite Voices I: Black Poets of the 1960s (Detroit, Michigan: Broadside Press, 1973), pp. 23-24.

¹³Sidran, p. 11.

¹⁴Hill, p. 20.

¹⁵Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London: Cox and Wyman Ltd., 1961), p. 40.

¹⁶Norman Stageberg and Wallace Anderson, Poetry as Experience (New York: American Book Co., 1952). p. 5.

¹⁷Stageberg, p. 5.

¹⁸Richard Wright, "Blueprint for Negro Writing," Amistad 2, ed. John P. Williams and Charles F. Harris (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 11.

¹⁹Eugenie Collier, "Steps Toward a Black Aesthetic: A Study of Black American Literary Criticism," Diss. University of Maryland, 1976, pp. 259-60.

TRANSCENDALIST RHETORIC AND THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

by Barbara G. Tucker

America in the late 1800s saw many sweeping reforms that greatly changed the economic, religious and social fabric of the nation while leaving the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the American mind intact. The actual beginnings of these reforms go back to the ideals and goals of a relatively small group of New Englanders in the 1830 and 1840s.

Who were these people and what were their demands? Today we do not think of some of them as avid reformers, but as theologians, philosophers, or literary figures. Some of them were active abolitionists; all of them were anti-slavery. Some of them were religious, almost Puritanical; others had very little thought for organized religion. Some advocated less than earth-shaking reforms, like the Graham Cracker diet, while others advocated Fourier socialism. Their professions included ministers, newspaper editors, Lyceum lecturers, land surveyors, and literary giants.

It was a time when almost any thinking Bostonian was convinced the world could be remade at his doorstep . . . Boston, in fact, manufactured reform societies so efficiently that when an epidemic of smallpox broke out, one contemporary writer observed, a society was instantly organized to oppose it.¹

These reformers, of whatever shade and texture in other opinions, had two things in common--a strong belief in the perfectability of man and in abolition.

Abolition was the all-consuming struggle. It gave purpose and direction to the age, unifying

every shade of reform and revolt.²

One very distinct and distinguished group of this general reform movement was the Transcendentalists. Their number included the members of a literary sect called the Transcendental Club that began in 1836 under the direction of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It was centered in Boston and Concord.³ Their most prominent members were Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, William Henry Channing, George Ripley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emerson and Henry David Thoreau; Theodore Parker, though not a literary man but a minister, agreed and associated with them. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the public speaking of these last three--Emerson, Thoreau, and Parker--in relation to an important target of the reform movement, the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848.

In December of 1845, a long series of events between Mexico and the United States came to a head when Major General Mariano Paredes overthrew President Herrera. Of a nationalistic temperament, Paredes refused to receive John Slidell, who had been sent by President James K. Polk to negotiate for the disputed California and New Mexico territories. Paredes' refusal had been encouraged by Polk's sending of General Zachary Taylor to occupy the disputed land near the boundary of the Rio Grande River. When a Mexican general ordered Zachary Taylor to leave the area and Taylor would not, the war began on April 25, 1846. On May 11, Polk gave his war message to Congress, stating his side (and his side only) of the argument.

The cup of forbearance has been exhausted . . .
As war exists, and notwithstanding all our efforts
to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself,
we are called by every consideration of duty and
patriotism to vindicate the honor, the rights,
and interests of our country.⁴

The problem existed in that neither country really knew where their boundaries were. Nevertheless, war existed, whether or not slavery and expansionism were obscured by Polk's war cries. The American war goals were not the Rio Grande, but New Mexico and California; but while Congressional leaders realized that, their vision was blurred by sectionalism. New Englanders and Northern Whigs protested the war in terms of slavery and possible harm to industry (in that there would be more Western and agrarian votes). Although it is widely assumed that Southerners favored the war, only a majority of the Democrats actually supported it. Even John C. Calhoun, while he had desired Texas, attacked the conquering and holding of Mexico and the Mexican territories.

Actually, those who favored the war and acquisition of California and New Mexico as a unit were Westerners and Southern Democrats. Politically, the war was not helpful to either party. Because slavery was such an inherent issue, it served to push Southerners and Northerners in both parties farther apart so that it was difficult to get them to agree on anything.⁵

If the war caused divisions in political parties, it tended to do the same in religious denominations.

Although numerous ministers and some outstanding clergymen (opposed the war), religious opposition was neither whelming nor unanimous. Only the Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Friends. . . wholeheartedly expressed outrage from the war's

beginning to end. . . . Religious opinion generally followed a regional pattern and reflected the composition of individual congregations."⁶

It is in the realm of religious and moral dissent that one can discuss the arguments of the Transcendentalists, because they opposed slavery and the war on moral grounds, and because:

They saw the war as never primarily an evil in itself; the war embodied a virulent malady afflicting American society as a whole. They feared the model republic of justice and freedom had forsaken its true mission.

Transcendentalism was imported from Germany by Emerson via his associations with English writers Thomas Carlyle, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth.⁸ Kant, a meditative, quiet man by nature, had addressed himself to answering the same questions as Locke's Essay on Human Understanding. In his Critique of Pure Reason (1781) he presented his study, not of what the mind studies and deals with, but how the mind does so.⁹ It is basically a philosophy of idealism.

Kant, perceiving the confusion of making man a satellite of the external world, resolved to try the effect of placing him in the position of central swing.¹⁰

Kant used the term "Transcendentalism" to mean the study of those qualities which are "the fundamental conceptions which transcend the sphere of experience and at the same time impose the conditions tributary to knowledge."¹¹

Kant believed that time and space were a priori to any perceptions. He divided the mind's operations into impressions, which fall within the time-space framework; thoughts, which are classified sensations/impressions; and reasons, which link the thoughts and arrive at ultimate principles, God being the ultimate ultimate

principle. Therefore, the ideals of the mind are reality; virtue, ethics and morality exist very really within the mind. "If a man cannot pass beyond the confines of his own mind, he still has a temple there."¹²

Transcendentalism was better fitted for New England than even Unitarianism, which Emerson later called a "corpse-cold religion," because Transcendentalism placed its emphasis on pure reason and the moral knowledge and perfectability to be found in it.¹³ New England's greatest contributions to Transcendentalism were its literature, its men, and the concept of "higher law" -- that the moral teachings of the individual's mind were superior to and to be followed before those laws of the government. This concept was highly important to New England Transcendentalism and proved to be a recurring theme.

Ralph Waldo Emerson began his career as a minister in 1829 after graduation from Harvard Divinity School. In 1832 he left his congregation at Boston's Second Church because of doctrinal differences, particularly the Lord's Supper. At this time he was a Unitarian. Already a widower, he took a trip to England and Europe and there met the English advocates of literary Transcendentalism and was converted himself.

Although he opposed the war for a variety of reasons, Emerson did not actively speak out against it.¹⁴ In his portrait of Emerson in relation to public affairs, Raymer McQuiston perhaps answers why Emerson was quiet. In many respects, Emerson at this

time had not really developed a strong philosophy of politics integrated with Transcendentalism. He did not even speak out against slavery until the Fugitive Slave Law of 1851, which he openly defied.¹⁵ Emerson was growing, something necessarily a part of Transcendentalism, but because of this growth, some of these statements seem inconsistent and he was more conservative than some of his radical philosophical brethren.¹⁶

One of these brethren is the second subject of this paper, Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau is an intriguing American literary figure because of his utter lack of interest in being a literary figure. In the summer of 1846, while Thoreau was living along at Walden Pond, he went into Concord on the mundane chore of getting a shoe repaired. The constable stopped him and demanded that he pay his state poll tax (which he had not paid in three years.) Thoreau refused on the grounds that he would be supporting the unjust war in Mexico, as he believed, to extend slavery. He spent the night in jail for his refusal, but a "veiled woman" paid the tax for him that night.¹⁷

Elizabeth Peabody published his essay "Resistance to Civil Government," today known as "Civil Disobedience," in Aesthetic Papers in 1849. Most sources seem to think that was the date of its origin, but the essay was actually a speech that Thoreau gave to the townspeople at the Concord Lyceum in 1846 not long after the incident.¹⁸ It is a conversational and communicative composition. Johnstone considers the essay a rhetorical paradox

because the supreme individualist, who believed that moral action must come from one's own conscience, was trying to persuade others and justify himself.¹⁹ However, this writer thinks the charge is taken too far. After all, Thoreau was still a man, and a man who knew he had to live with others; the content of his speech does not negate the efficacy of rhetoric, it just attempts to defend the superiority of civil resistance over rhetoric.

Paradoxical or not, Thoreau's speech is an interesting piece of persuasion. His subject is not the jail incident--he deals with that lightly. It is not slavery nor the Mexican War--he mentions the latter only to accuse the United States of being the aggressor in an unjust war. The purpose of his address was to explain his act of "declaring war with the State"--to be the things that causes friction and thus the obstruction of the State's unjust actions.

I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion . . . This is my position. . . Let him see that he does only what belongs to himself and to the hour.²⁰

Thoreau had taken the individualism of Transcendentalism and made it into a form of political activity within the democratic state.²¹

What Thoreau felt most strongly about was individual actions based on individual thought, not many of the issues with which he is associated. As far as being a persuasive act of immediate social impact, Thoreau's refusal to pay his taxes was probably pointless--

as Emerson pointed out, it was a state, not a federal tax he refused to pay.²² His speech to the Lyceum of tiny Concord, dealing with individualism and with the war only peripherally, seems to have had little impact because it is not even remembered as a speech, and his attitude toward the rhetorical situation was somewhat laissez faire. The real impact of Thoreau's act and rhetoric was not seen until it was read and put into practice several years later by Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, Emma Goldman and Black civil rights advocates.²³

Like Thoreau, Theodore Parker has a compelling historical personality and biography. He supported himself while he received his formal education at Harvard College and Divinity School, but his real education took place every day as he spent more than a dozen hours in his extensive library. Frothingham calls Emerson the seer of Transcendentalism and Alcott the mystic, but Parker was its preacher.²⁴

In the pantheon of the Transcendentalists, historian Perry Miller places him second only to Emerson himself in giving shape and meaning to the movement. But in "the world of action" Miller places him even above Emerson.²⁵

Originally a Unitarian, Parker's famous sermon "A Discourse on the Transient and Permanent in Christianity" showed ideas about life and religion that would ally him with the mystic, individualistic Transcendental Club early in his career.

Unlike Emerson and Thoreau, Parker was more interested in applying his ideas to social reforms like abolition, temperance,

woman's rights, capital punishment and prison reform.²⁶ His Boston "Melodeon" was one of the few churches that welcomed Negro members.²⁷ Therefore, it is understandable that he would be most outspoken and eloquent about the Mexican War. He gave several notable addresses on the War, but that of June 7, 1846, not long after Polk's declaration, expresses his thoughts especially forcefully.

Parker was incensed over the declaration of war, but he had postponed giving this sermon for a month in order to approach the subject with a cool head. His sermon had four distinct parts. First, he dealt with the nature of God as revealed in the Old Testament as opposed to that shown in the New Testament. He re-established a basis already present in his non-orthodox audience, that of a loving God of Moral example who has both written his precepts (the higher laws) in the Bible and on men's hearts. He then dealt briefly with man, especially the type of man who goes off to war--the base, cowardly sort. Parker asserts that it takes a brave man to resist war's evils. Herein lies an incongruity with the Transcendentalists--although the individual was the source of moral knowledge and action, they had a prejudice against the masses. Parker then stated his thesis--"If war be right, then Christianity is wrong, false, and a lie." The converse of the statement was also true.

His third section dealt with the nature of war at length. The sermon is thirty-one printed pages long in all, which says a

great deal for Theodore Parker's power as an orator and his congregation's power as listeners. War is a three-fold evil--a waste of property, a waste of human life, and a breeder of crime and other corruptions. In dealing with the first evil, Parker showed some extensive research and a remarkable ability to deal with statistics. He explicitly appealed to his Bostonian audience--city "whose most popular Idol is Mammon, whose God is Gold." He broke the figures down to their effect on each citizen--for it is the humble citizen who paid the price and who received nothing in return. In relation to the second evil, he stated that war is nothing but murder--and here again, the humble classes were affected the most. To illustrate the third evil, he envisioned the Apostle John as a chaplain on the deck of a battle ship, showing the absurdity of war in a Christian context.

To preface his discussion of the Mexican war specifically, he vividly depicts a fictional war between the cities of Cambridge and Boston. Here his power with words and imagery is closely akin to that of Jonathan Edwards. A war between Cambridge and Boston as he described would have been like the one with Mexico. The present war was "iniquitous" and Mexico was clearly the innocent victim. This is the reverse of most presidential war oratory, which places the foreign power clearly in the wrong and America as the victim.²⁸ The North's sin in it all was that they did not oppose it. "Your mouth is gagged with Cotton." Mexico, an inferior race, did not even have slavery, and slavery was the

basic reason he assigned to the war.

Parker ended with a solution and challenge for dealing with this massive evil. "Resist it, do not support it . . . follow your sense of right." He feared that this war showed that the American people now believed that majorities and force determine what is right and wrong. His conclusion is a striking comparison of the sad but wise Old World Giant and the mocking, young New World Giant.

This sermon shows a variety of things about Parker the orator. The style is vivid, plain, direct and active. Parker skillfully blends authoritative, motivational and substantive appeals in equal amounts. He uses classical and Biblical allusions. He shows a genuine concern for his people and the nation, calling out emotionally to God at times. We find an oratory molded of concern, knowledge, conviction, and skill.

John H. Schroeder makes the following statement about the Transcendentalists in his book Mr. Polk's War. The Transcendentalists

were distressed that the democratic virtues and idealism of an earlier age had now been set aside by a tide of pervasive materialism, grasping expansionism, and proslavery politics. Thus, their dissent is not notable because these individuals were outspoken or effective public critics, because they were not.²⁸

Because of Parker's sermon it is hard to fully accept Schroeder's criticism that the Transcendentalist speakers had little effect on

their contemporary audiences. However, the true impact of Schroeder's statement and their speaking in general might be that the rhetoric must be seen in the broader historical context. They were concerned with trends they saw in America, and wanted to offer their Transcendental solutions of individualism to political problems. Seeing the broader context, their ideas and expressions appealed to a broader audience as well. Plato thought that rhetoric was only an art when it was based on truth, and thus more enduring. Perhaps being ahead of their time, these three speakers and their less vocal colleagues generated messages that were received and interpreted with greater understanding and appreciation by succeeding generations than by their contemporaries.

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Traitors and Tyrants:

The Burr Trial as a Defense of Individual Rights

Kassian A. Kovalcheck

On May 22, 1807, the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Virginia convened at Richmond for the most dramatic trial in the short history of the United States. With Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall presiding, the court began the tedious project of selecting a grand jury for the conspiracy trial of Aaron Burr, former vice-president of the country he was accused of betraying. While the nature of the charges and the character of the principal defendant attracted and maintained public interest, the questions involved were not only the alleged Burr Conspiracy, but also the conflict between the power of the federal government and the rights of individuals in American society. This trial tested the concept of civil liberties as much as it adjudicated the constitutional issues of treason. When on October 20, 1807, Chief Justice Marshall declared in his concluding statement that he could not find evidence significant enough to bind the defendant over, Burr left the court a free but ruined man. The Grand Jury, in an earlier statement, had expressed popular sentiment in their verdict: "We of the jury find that Aaron Burr is not proved to be guilty under this indictment."¹ Burr could protest that the jury had no right to deface the record of the court,"² but at the age of forty-nine his political and public life had ended.

Only through the skillful rhetorical strategies of a brilliant defense had he maintained his freedom, if not his honor.

As a soldier, lawyer, orator, politician, and would-be adventurer, Aaron Burr participated in many of the conflicts of early American history. The Burr Conspiracy--his ill-fated expedition into the Western territories--and the spectacular duel with Alexander Hamilton have overshadowed his accomplishments as the founder of the modern political machine, as the first American feminist, and as an able president of the United States Senate. In spite of the work of Walter McCaleb, the Burr Conspiracy remains a mystery. Throughout the long months of the trial neither treason nor high misdemeanor could be proven, but the battery of prosecution witnesses clearly demonstrated that some military action had been planned. The prosecution could never show that Burr intended anything more than a conflict with the Spaniards, but Burr never proved that was all he intended. His misrepresentations and furtive dealings, while suggesting that he could not have participated in all the undertakings he promoted, cloud the explanations of his motives.³

Public sentiment in the United States clearly pronounced Burr guilty. Much of this sentiment was engendered and promoted by the President and the Republican press. In an address to Congress, Jefferson explained the conspiracy, and, in referring to Burr, suggested that "his guilt is beyond question."⁴ The Maryland Gazette announced that "Indignation and abhorrence toward the traitors can only be exceeded by exultation at the issue."⁵ Not only did the papers carry reports of the entire proceedings, but

they also, before the trial began, published all the evidence against Burr.⁶ The Federalists, friends of neither Burr nor Jefferson, delighted in this conflict. The Washington correspondent for the Massachusetts' voice of Federalism, the Columbian Centinel, wrote:

It is extraordinary that all those who have lately been implicated in the so much talked of Conspiracies, rebellions, etc., should be, to a man, rank democrats, and high Jeffersonians. An insurgent in office is only a little more quiet than an insurgent out. And the relationship between Democracy and Conspiracy is as high almost as that of brother.⁷

Yet if Burr found any support in the press, it was from the Federalists, for the same correspondent had earlier written: "And though I may be alone in my opinion, and am indifferent were not only Burr, but one half of his democratic brethren convicted of TREASON, as they could have been of SEDITION, I do not believe the charges,"⁸ while another Federalist paper suggested that the Republicans, in their treatment of Burr, were laying the "foundation for despotism."⁹ This issue of government oppression was seized by the defense as their main rhetorical strategy. Surrounded by the best available legal talent, Burr mustered a formidable opposition to the prosecution. Edmund Randolph, chief counsel for the defense, was, at fifty-four, closing a distinguished career. He had served as mayor of Williamsburg, Attorney General of Virginia, member of the Continental Congress, Governor of Virginia, member of the Constitutional Convention, and Attorney General of the United States in Washington's Cabinet.

With the addition of John Wickham and Benjamin Botts, recognized leaders in the Virginia Bar, the defense was not only able to argue the involved intricacies of the Constitution, but also to sustain the contention that Burr was being persecuted and tyrannized by the federal government. Convinced that an impartial trial was impossible, Burr began this approach in the selection of the Grand Jury. When questioning Dr. William Foushes, a Republican who, while he admitted that he considered Burr's intentions treasonous, believed that he could be impartial to the facts, Burr presented a brief but tightly reasoned speech on whether a jurymen ought to be impartial, and concluded that "no man is impartial who has made up his mind as to intention."¹⁰ In another instance, when Joseph Eggleston confessed that, having read the depositions in the newspapers, he believed in Burr's guilt, Burr took full advantage of the situation. Declaring that "the industry that has been used throughout the country to prejudice my cause, leaves me very little chance indeed of an impartial jury," and suspecting that "there is very little chance that I can expect a better man to try my cause," he accepted Eggleston with the hope that "he will endeavor to be impartial."¹¹ In the selection of John Randolph of Roanoke as the foreman of the jury, the defense received their only favor. Although Randolph was not well disposed toward Burr, he also had little regard for Jefferson's action. Additionally, Randolph took the rights of the individual seriously. When, as a result of the "Conspiracy,"

the government attempted to have Congress suspend Habeas Corpus, Randolph proclaimed against the legislation. Suggesting that the Senate was a "two-penny gallery," which "rendered all their proceedings touching the public burden, or the liberties of the people, highly suspicious,"¹² Randolph concluded his speech by asking if the United States were under a military or a civilian government, and protested having men transported by military tribunal.¹³ Here then was an ideal jurymen for a defense based on individual rights and government oppression. When, early in the trial, the prosecution was unable to produce General James Wilkenson, the defense was able to clearly state its argument on government oppression. Wilkenson, Commanding General of the United States Army, who in his modestly titled autobiography Memoirs of My Own Times declared he had "a conscience void of offence,"¹⁴ was seriously implicated in the conspiracy. The depth of his involvement is unknown because of Burr's penchant for ciphered letters and secret dealings and because of Wilkenson's reputation as a liar. Regarded by Burr as a turncoat, Wilkenson had informed Jefferson of the Western expedition and became a chief witness for the prosecution. His delay for the trial, however, proved so embarrassing to the prosecution that even the pro-Jeffersonian Richmond Enquirer lamented Wilkenson's reliability.¹⁵ District Attorney George Hay, realizing the difficulty of his position, requested allowance be made for a man "of General Wilkenson's age and bulk to travel to this city."¹⁶ Edmund Randolph

replied that seventeen days should have been enough time, "even with the gigantic bulk of General Wilkenson himself."¹⁷ In the ensuing argument, Randolph suggested that the government had issued an order "to treat Col. Burr as an outlaw and to ruin and destroy him and his property."¹⁸ Burr then launched into a protracted statement explaining his persecution at the hands of the government. Suggesting he was being treated by the "amiable morality of this government," he stated that, in a "practice truly consonant with European despotisms," his friends had been seized by military authority, individuals had been dragged by "compulsory process" before tribunals and compelled to testify against him, his papers had been seized, and post offices had been broken open and robbed of his papers.¹⁹ In his tightly reasoned argument Burr concluded by asking: "Where then is equality between the government and myself?"²⁰ Clearly, Burr was attempting to portray himself as a powerless individual, denied his civil rights and oppressed by a vicious government. In an effort to bolster this position the defense next turned to direct attacks on Jefferson. In his message to Congress concerning the Conspiracy, Jefferson mentioned a letter received from General Wilkenson. Burr then requested this letter and other papers relevant to the trial and asked Chief Justice Marshall to issue a subpoena duces tecum to the President. Although this letter had little relevance to the constitutional arguments of the trial, Burr used it to enhance his position. Not only did the presence of the letter indicate that Jefferson personally

Burr's character and suggested that he was too much involved in secrecy. "His mysterious actions have so concealed truth and opposed public justice that what should not have taken as many hours has taken several weeks."²⁵ In answering the defense position that no overt act had been committed, Hay compared Burr to Bonaparte, and said that if the planning had been done by Burr then he also had responsibility for the acts.²⁶ The defense followed their original argument that under the Constitution it took two witnesses to an overt act, and continued to portray Burr as a helpless individual harassed by the government.²⁷ Additionally, they started to make personal attacks on the prosecution, suggesting that to have civil liberties in the hands of Hay was "dangerous for the people."²⁸ In proving that Burr was being persecuted by the government, the defense was aided by the prosecution. As the trial moved to a conclusion the prosecution perceived that Burr would be acquitted, and they began preparation for future actions. This caused Botts to protest, suggesting that the prosecution was attempting to get two indictments out of a single act, and asking, "Do we have fewer rights here than in Great Britain?"²⁹ When Burr, in an effort to receive additional information, requested another subpoena of the President, Wirt responded by stating that the government did not desire to release evidence because they could still try Burr in another court.³⁰ Hay, obviously bitter because the court had excluded most of his evidence, reminded the court that Burr could

still be tried for treason in other states.³¹ Burr said that he hoped the court would not proceed in anticipation of a motion not yet made,³² while Botts concluded that statements such as these were dangerous for civil liberties.³³ At the conclusion of the trial Chief Justice Marshall said, "A degree of eloquence seldom displayed on any occasion has embellished a solidity of argument and a depth of research by which the court has been greatly aided in forming the opinion it is about to deliver."³⁴ When the opinion was read, the defense found itself victorious, but Marshall's opinion lacked any mention of civil liberties as an issue in the trial. Burr went free not because of the actions of a vicious and oppressive government, but because Marshall could not find an overt act witnessed by two individuals as required by the Constitution. The Richmond Enquirer felt that the nation had been left to suffer at the hands of traitors,³⁵ and the Federalist press could only cheer Marshall's impartiality.³⁶ While Burr faced the possibilities of future trials--possibilities he clearly felt to be oppressive³⁷ --and while the trial had not been decided on the basis of individual liberties, the Burr Trials did show that protection of individual rights could be an effective rhetorical strategy. If the populace was not convinced of Burr's innocence, Jefferson's policies lacked, at least, total acceptance. A jury composed primarily of Jeffersonians, if it could not find Burr innocent, was unable to find Burr guilty. And the trial demonstrated that even the President was not outside the grasp of the courts. Civil liberties as a rhetorical issue, if not as a constitutional argument, received support from the Burr Trials.

NOTES

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AREAS OF INTEREST: Mass Communication, Interpersonal, Theatre,
Interpretation

TSCA Executive Committee and General Business Meeting

Minutes

September 16-17, 1983 Fall Creek Falls

Members Present: Jim Holm, David Briody, Reece Elliott, Michael Osborn, Stanley McDaniel, Ralph Hillman, Richard Ranta, Jim Quiggins

Jim Holm convened the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

The following issues were considered:

1. The relationship between the Tennessee Theatre Association and TSCA was discussed including the possibility of a joint annual meeting. Related discussion regarding date and site for future meetings followed. The Committee recommends the 1984 Conference be held at Montgomery Bell on the weekend of September 28-29.
2. Holm established an Ad Hoc Committee chaired by Joan Gardner to recruit greater high school teacher participation in TSCA.
3. Charlene Odle appeared before the Committee to urge the Association to involve undergraduates in the annual conference and to provide an opportunity for publication in the TSCA Journal. The Committee endorsed this idea and will ask David Briody and David Walker to implement these suggestions for 1983-84.
4. The committee proposes the following changes in the organization to the Association: Theatre and Interpretation interest groups be combined; Broadcasting interest group title be changed to Mass Communication; Religious Speech title be changed to Religious Communication; establish a new interest group called "Organizational Communication" beginning in 83-84. Chairman Holm will "appoint" Walt Kirkpatrick as the chairman of this new group.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. to be reconvened at 12:00 Noon on September 17.

5. Frank Bluestein has agreed to serve as the chairman of the Theatre interest group for the '84 Conference in place of Betty Kash.
6. Reece Elliott will serve as chairman of the Nominating Committee for the 84-85 slate of officers, along with Jim Quiggins, Ralph Hillman, and Michael Osborn.
7. Bob Luna has agreed to serve as chairman of the Awards

Committee for the 1984 awards. The Committee will also consist of Paul Walwick and Mrs. White (H.S. teacher). The Committee recommends an award for the best Journal article over a three-year period.

8. An official call for papers or proposals for programs for the annual conference will be issued by October 15 with an announced deadline of January 15.
9. The Committee discussed the idea of acquiring a keynote presenter from within the discipline for the conference program.
10. The report of the Nominating Committee is attached.

These deliberations were shared at a general meeting of those at the Conference on Saturday afternoon.

Recorded by

Jim Quiggins,
Executive Secretary

Report of the Nominating Committee
for the 84-85 Officers of TSCA

Members: Reece Elliott (Chair), Michael Osborn, Ralph Hillman,
Jim Quiggins

Nominees:

President Elect: Lorayne Lester
Gerald Fulkerson
(Alternate-Reece Elliott)

Executive Secretary: Paul Prill

Journal Editor: Stanley McDaniel

Interest Group Chairpersons:

Curriculum: Jayne Williams
Richard Ranta
(Alternate-Jack Sloan)

Mass Communication: David Palko
Don Page
(Alternate-Tom Zynda)

Forensics: Kass Kolvacheck
Jim Brooks
(Alternate-Russell Church)

Interpersonal: Debbie Zimmerman
Joan Gardner
(Alternate-Jim Quiggins)

Religious Communication: Steve Johnson
Jim Knear
(Alternate-Richard Dean)

Rhetoric & Public Address: John Bakke
Reece Elliott
(Alternate-Richard Dean)

Theatre & Interpretation: Dorothea Norton
Joe Filippo
(Alternate-Harriette Insignares)

Organizational Communication: David Walker
Walt Kirkpatrick
(Alternate-Jay Conner)

RESULTS OF ELECTION FOR 1984 - 85

President Elect: Gerald Fulkerson

Executive Secretary: Paul Prill

INTEREST GROUP CHAIRPERSONS:

Curriculum: Ralph Hillman

Mass Communication: Don Page

Forensics: Jim Brooks

Interpersonal: Joan Gardner

Religious Communication: Jim Knear

Rhetoric & Public Address: John Bakke

Theatre & Interpretation: Joe Filippo

Organizational Communication: David Walker

REMEMBER OUR TSCA CONVENTION SEPTEMBER 28-29, 1984 at
PARIS LANDING STATE PARK!!!!

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

THE JOURNAL OF THE TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION is published twice yearly in the Fall and Spring. Subscriptions and requests for advertising rates should be addressed to David Walker, Box 111, MTSU, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. Regular subscription price for non-members is \$4.00 yearly, or \$2.00 per issue. The TSCA JOURNAL is printed by the MTSU Print Shop, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. Special fourth class postage is paid at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.

The purpose of the publication is to expand professional interest and activity in all areas of the field of speech communication in Tennessee. Articles from all areas of speech study will be welcomed, with special consideration given to articles treating pedagogical concepts, techniques, and experiments.

All papers should be sent to the editor. Authors should submit two copies of their manuscripts, each under a separate title page also to include the author's name and address. Manuscripts without the identifying title pages will be forwarded by the editor to a panel of reader-referees who will represent the varied interests within the discipline.

All papers should be double-spaced, typed in standard type with a dark ribbon, and on standard typing paper. Margins should be standard and uniform. Notes need to be typed single-spaced on separate sheets following the last page of the manuscript proper. The first footnote should be unnumbered and should contain essential information about the author. This footnote will be eliminated by the editor from the manuscripts sent to the panel of readers. Any professional style guide, consistently used, is acceptable. Accuracy, originality, and proper citing of source materials are the responsibilities of the contributors.

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