ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE RHETORICAL ORIGINS OF THE AFRICAN COLONIZATION MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

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From the introduction of slavery to British North America, the concurrent presence of freedom and slavery fostered much tension. Still, in the early 1800s, slavery was not yet the intransigent issue that would lead to civil war. Amidst mounting tensions and declining, yet still viable, possibility for resolution, a nationwide effort to colonize free blacks to Africa began. Positioned as neither immediate emancipation, nor the continuation of the status quo, colonizationists framed their scheme as a solution to the problem of slavery. With the discourse generated at a germinal meeting on December 21, 1816, the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States (later called the American Colonization Society) was created and motivations for African colonization were set forth.

This project explores the rhetorical development of the national African colonization movement in The United States. To begin, this project traces the discursive tensions between discourses of security and morality to which colonizationists would

need to attend to advance their scheme. Driving this tension was an emerging antagonism between instrumental and pathetic dimensions of rhetoric. The project then illuminates the potential to overcome such tensions that had been cultivated in political economic (i.e., legislative) discourse about slavery. This potential resolution was defined by the development of moderate rhetorical strategies to address the problem of slavery. Turning to the initial meeting of the Colonization Society, this project attends to how colonizationists negotiated the discursive tensions and used the rhetorical resources of the moment to motivate colonization.

Ultimately, this project argues that the motivations offered by colonizationists in support of African colonization failed in their attempt to use moderate rhetorical strategies and thus, failed to overcome the discursive tensions of slavery.

THE RHETORICAL ORIGINS OF THE AFRICAN COLONIZATION MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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DEDICATION

For Belinda and Ella.

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On December 18, 1816 like any other day, the *National Intelligencer* of the District of Columbia published dozens of advertisements. The subjects ranged from the sale of sugar and coffee to the promotion of a dancing assembly. Crowded between an announcement from a visiting New Jersey businessman and a sales pitch for a flour and meal producer was an inauspicious announcement of a meeting. The notice proclaimed, "A meeting of those gentlemen who are friendly to the promotion of a plan for colonizing the free blacks of the United States, is requested at the Davis Hotel, in the city of Washington, on Saturday the 21st day of December, at 11 o'clock, A. M."[1] Its eighty-three words, sparse verbiage, and bleak aesthetic, made the ad appear no more important than the others. Yet, the subject of the meeting—the colonization of free blacks—and the rhetorical efforts surrounding that movement were connected to one of the most disconcerting questions to U.S. society: How to solve the problems of slavery?

The practice of slavery and the competing discourses that developed tore at the loose seams of U.S. society. The perpetuation of the slave system had been facilitated by public discourse primarily concerned with white security and the maintenance of social order. Over time, however, some Americans began questioning the morality of slavery and often did so with highly emotive language that challenged the docility of security discourse. As such moral discourse grew more prominent and more intense, rhetors concerned with security took an even stronger stance in their attempts to insulate slavery from interference and change. The growing tension between security and morality discourses were linguistic manifestations of a great paradox in U.S. history: the

[1] *National Intelligencer*, December 18, 1816, n.p.

simultaneous rise of appeals to freedom and liberty and the growing practice of slavery.[2] By the mid 1810s, a country that had at one time seemed united began to grow apart.[3] As historian George Dangerfield observes, after the end of the War of 1812, "American sectionalism came snarling to the front."[4] In the waning days of 1816, sitting at the precipice of this snarling sectionalism, the organizers of the colonization meeting saw an opportunity to relieve the discursive tensions over slavery and to achieve a *United* States of America.

Colonizationists faced a situation with tremendous obstacles. The controversy over slavery had been brewing for nearly two centuries prior to the meeting. From 1808 to 1831, security and morality discourses, although initially accommodating of slavery, grew in opposition to one another and intensified divisions on the subject of slavery.[5] Edwin Black persuasively argued that this period was not so much marked by peace on the issue of slavery, but marked by the suppressed emotions toward slavery.[6] As those emotions began to surface, the possibility of a peaceful resolution to slavery diminished.

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[2] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 4.

[3] Rebecca Brooks Gruver, *American Nationalism, 1783-1830: A Self-Portrait* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1971), 249.

[4] George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (London: Methuen, 1953), 91.

[5] Alice Adams begins her study of anti-slavery sentiment from the assumption that the study of slavery has been neglected from 1808 to 1831. Her contention is that anti-slavery societies burgeoned at the local levels, yet lacked the national voice. See Alice Dana Adams, *The Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery in America, 1808-1831* (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1964). Larry Tise further demonstrated the importance of this era, focusing on the proslavery arguments of the time. Tise argued, "Although historians have traditionally skipped over the period from 1790 to 1820 in their overviews of proslavery in America, it actually turns out to be the most important era for the shaping of American proslavery ideology." Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 42.

[6] Edwin Black, "The Sentimental Style as Escapism, or the Devil with Dan'l Webster," in *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, ed. (Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1978), 75-86.

However, all was not lost. Colonizationists seized an opportunity to overcome these tensions through the discourse of political economy. Such discourse pervaded the legislative sphere as rhetors attempted to craft some agreement (albeit tenuous) on the subject of slavery. Winthrop Jordan has boldly claimed that with the passage of the Slave Trade Act of 1808, "slavery was no longer a critical issue. . . the albatross of the slave trade no longer hung painfully on the national conscience."[7] Through political economic discourse, a moderate rhetorical approach to slavery helped to quell the discursive tensions. The meeting of supporters of colonization attempted to address the problem of slavery in The United States by advancing a nationally-supported African colonization scheme using the powerful potential of moderate rhetoric.

This project attends to the rhetorical genesis of the national African colonization movement in The United States. To establish a foundation for this inquiry, the present chapter details how the colonization meeting was organized within the troubled context of U.S. slavery. Next, the purpose of this study is contextualized within the relevant literature on colonization and early nineteenth-century U.S. public discourse. Finally, this chapter offers a brief outline for this study.

The Colonization Meeting of December 21, 1816: Seeking a Middle Ground

On December 21, 1816, the national movement for African colonization was initiated. Meeting in a popular Georgetown tavern, this assemblage of religious leaders, politicians, wealthy landowners, and philanthropists discussed the necessity of a

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[7] Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 331. See also Adams, *Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery*, 2.

colonization scheme to address the slave question for the betterment of the nation. Those attending the meeting represented Northern, Southern, and Western heritage. Yet, colonization was not a Northern, Southern, or Western solution. To the diverse cadre assembled, colonization was considered a U.S. solution. The diversity of vocation and geographical representation at the meeting demonstrated the compromising spirit that guided the speakers. Believing that colonization was beneficial for the United States, the result of the meeting was the establishment of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States, later called the American Colonization Society (hereafter referred to as the "Colonization Society"). The way in which the meeting was organized illustrates the potential for colonization to bring together opposing discourses to resolve the tensions of slavery.

The growing tensions of slavery led states to explore the possibility of colonization as a remedy to the problems of slavery. In 1815, the Union Humane Society of Ohio called for common action and the removal of blacks away from elite whites.[8] While the Ohio group called for unified action, it did not push for national aid. A move toward mobilizing broader support for colonization was attempted in March of 1816 by a resident of Georgetown and "several citizens of two neighboring states." The inability of this meeting to nationalize the issue of colonization owed to the participants' regional isolation, a point that the *North American Review* would make in describing the March meeting: "This [the meeting] was without the knowledge or participation of any

[8] Henry Noble Sherwood, "The Formation of the American Colonization Society," *The Journal of Negro History* 2 (1917): 211.

individual whatever, living north of Maryland."[9] When conducted at the local level, colonization schemes had marginal rhetorical or practical effect on slavery.

Recognizing that the federal government could provide the necessary means to make colonization work, a few states—Kentucky and Virginia—turned their efforts toward involving the national government. In a meeting held on October 18 and 19, 1815, the Kentucky Colonization Society petitioned Congress for land "to be laid off as an asylum for all those Negroes and mulattoes who have been, and those who may hereafter be, emancipated within the United States."[10] Similarly, a small assemblage in New Jersey drafted a resolution on November 6, 1816, asking the state legislature "to use their influence with the National Legislature to adopt some plan of colonizing the *Free Blacks*."[11] State legislatures and colonization societies recognized that colonization was a significant issue and a massive undertaking, thus, they began directing their persuasive efforts toward the federal government.

The organization of the colonization meeting of December 21 reflected advocates' attempts to nationalize the U.S. movement for African colonization. Creating a national organization would bring together the efforts and resources of the various state legislatures and colonization societies to more forcefully advance their cause. Significantly, a national effort would bring together advocates from Northern, Southern, and Western states, a diverse group whose motivations for colonization varied. These motivations tended toward the dominant discourses of slavery at the times—security and

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[9] "American Colonization Society," *North American Review* 35 (1832): 126.

[10] This petition reached the Congress on January 18, 1816, and was referred to the Committee on Public Lands. *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 1st sess., 691.

[11] "Colony of Free Blacks," *National Intelligencer*, December 14, 1816, n.p. This was also relayed in "Chronicle," *Niles' Weekly Register*, December 14, 1816, 259.

morality. The organization of the colonization meeting represented the coming together of these two discourses in the seat of governmental power. With Southerners concerned with securing plantations from free blacks and Northerners pushing to afford blacks (free blacks to start with) the rights granted by God and nature, the orchestration of the colonization meeting foreshadowed the rhetorical alternative to the contemporary discourse on slavery that colonization would create.

To begin, security discourse played a significant role in motivating the colonization meeting of 1816. In February of that year, Virginia Assemblymen Charles Fenton Mercer became captivated with the concept of colonization after becoming aware of secret Virginia General Assembly journals from 1800.[12] The journals revealed that after the rebellion of the slave Gabriel in 1800, the Assembly went into closed sessions to discuss how to contain slave insurrections. The results of these proceedings were official communications from Virginia Governor James Monroe to President Thomas Jefferson asking that land in western territories, or elsewhere, be set aside as a colony for blacks.[13] With the legislative session over by February, Mercer was unable to act on the subject of colonization in the legislative arena.

Mercer's advocacy for colonization went beyond the Virginia General Assembly, as he began to spread word of the benefits of such a plan. On a trip to Washington, Mercer encountered Elias Boudinot Caldwell—an old schoolmate from New Jersey—and Francis Scott Key. During this April 1816 encounter, Mercer relayed his intent to

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[12] Mercer first became aware of the secret journals after a night of drinking with fellow Assemblymen, one of whom had participated in the secret session. C[harles] F[enton] Mercer, "Address of the Hon. Charles Fenton Mercer, AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE AM. COL. SOCIETY. JANUARY 18, 1853," *The African Repository*, May 1853, 143. See also Douglas R. Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer and the Trial of National Conservatism* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), 105-7.

[13] The Jefferson-Monroe correspondence can be found in Philip Slaughter, *The Virginian History of African Colonization* (Richmond, VA: Macfarlane and Fergusson, 1855), 2-5.

introduce a colonization measure in the next session of the Virginia Assembly. Curiously, in March of 1816, a group of men had called a meeting to discuss the merits of colonization.[14] Though no formal actions came from this March colonization meeting, that such a meeting would be called demonstrated that colonization was gaining attention. The social and political relevance similarly interested Mercer's interlocutors. Key seemed interested in the plan and intimated that he might pursue a seat in the Maryland legislature with colonization as a policy objective. Caldwell took interest in Mercer's ideas, but could not return to New Jersey to garner support due to the financial needs of his family. Instead he wrote letters to his acquaintances extolling the virtues of colonization. One such correspondent was his brother-in-law, Robert Finley, a Presbyterian minister who directed the Andover Theological Seminary in New Jersey. The communication campaign undertaken by Mercer, Key, and Caldwell enhanced the exigency of colonization, arguing that the scheme provided a politically viable solution to the problems of slave revolts.[15]

Caldwell's correspondence with Finley may or may not have been the first that the Reverend had heard of colonization.[16] Regardless, Finley identified with the aims of colonization. With Finley, though, colonization was discussed less as a political solution to slave rebelliousness and more as a moral cause. The increase in moral improvement societies during the early nineteenth century created an environment encouraging

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[14] "American Colonization Society," 126.

[15] The detailed accounting of Mercer's role in motivating colonization in 1816 is found in Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer*, 107-112.

[16] Egerton makes a point to correct the record, which had previously positioned Finley as the impetus for the Society's meeting. See Douglas R. Egerton, "'Its Origin is Not a Little Curious': A New Look at the American Colonization Society," in Egerton, *Rebels, Reformers, & Revolutionaries: Collected Essays and Second Thoughts* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 107-19.

outreach, evangelism, and missionary zeal. Prior to the colonization meeting, Finley pondered his own actions toward moral improvement: "When I consider what many others have effected for the benefit of their suffering fellow-creatures at an earlier age than mine, I am humbled and mortified to think how little I have done."[17] In November of 1816, Finley shared his thoughts on colonization with the New York and New Jersey Synod of the Presbyterian Church. In this setting, Finley revealed a colonization scheme that differed from Mercer's. Mercer's colonization plan aimed at having numerous states send requests to the president to remove free blacks to Africa; Finley sought to create a national organization to lobby Congress for the funding needed to colonize.[18]

Just as Finley's discourse employed moral rhetoric in support of colonization, the Reverend was well-equipped to bring such rhetoric to bear in political situations. Upon ordination as a Presbyterian clergyman in 1795, Finley began ministering at a small church in Baskingridge, New Jersey, where he was also the master of the local academy. Some of his students included future national figures like Samuel Southard, secretary of the Navy, senator, and governor of New Jersey; and Theodore Frelinghuysen, senator and governor of New Jersey. The Bible served as a primary text for Finley's instruction of the elite men at Baskingridge, a point Finley made emphatically to the school master while at the academy. Finley's adherence to the Bible, in and out of religious settings, demonstrated his commitment to translating moral lessons into all areas of life. Finley gained such influence through his marriage to Esther Caldwell. Wealthy New Jersey resident Elias Boudinot became Esther's foster father after her parents were killed by the

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[17] Finley quoted in P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 17.

[18] Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer*, 110.

British. Boudinot had been president of Congress, an associate of Alexander Hamilton, held political office under George Washington, served as president of the Presbyterian General Assembly, and held a seat on the board of trustees at Princeton.[19] Finley's dedication to the Bible as a socially relevant text, as well as his exposure to the world of political and social elites, provided a foundation for Finley's participation in creating the Colonization Society.

Planning for the colonization meeting began in earnest in December of 1816. Finley traveled from New Jersey to Washington in early December, continuing to discuss the benefits of colonization in the familiar settings of religious institutions. Finley garnered an audience at the F Street Presbyterian Church (often called Dr. Laurie's Presbyterian Church as Rev. Dr. James Laurie was the sole pastor there) with Caldwell, Samuel Mills (who would become the Colonization Society's first agent to Liberia), and Dr. Laurie, among others.[20] The moral virtues of colonization drove Finley's interest in colonization. But to spread the word about the moral virtues of colonization, preaching in religious circles would not be enough.

Finley not only continued to spread the word among Presbyterian parishioners, he began to engage the political process as well. Upon arriving to Washington, Finley began distributing his pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Colonization of Freed Blacks*, among congresspeople.[21] Finley also became a presence in Washington social circles. Escorted by Elias Caldwell's wife, Finley visited the home of Samuel Harrison and Margaret Bayard Smith on December 4. The social event that evening included President James

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[19] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement,* 16.

[20] "The Presbyterian Church and Colonization," *African Repository*, July 1860, 205-08.

[21] Robert Finley, *Thoughts on the Colonization of Freed Blacks* (Washington: n.p., 1816).

Madison and President-elect James Monroe. In a letter, Mrs. Smith reported that Finley was introduced to Monroe and "several other gentlemen" and that Finley "went home, to use his own expression, perfectly satisfied and gratified."[22]

In a slightly different vein, Key and Caldwell had also engaged the political and legal dimensions of slavery in Washington since their meeting with Mercer. In the summer of 1816, Key had offered free legal services to a man who came to Washington to sue for the freedom of himself and other free blacks who were kidnapped and sold into slavery. Caldwell helped to advertise the case and raised money for the cause of the kidnapped free blacks.[23] The activities of colonization supporters during the year 1816 advanced the cause of a national colonization movement. Although colonization advocates continued to appeal to specific audiences—often defined by the use of security, moral, or political economic rhetoric—supporters also took actions that attempted to diffuse colonization sentiment beyond their core audience.

The Colonization Society held its first meeting on December 21, at the Davis Hotel in Georgetown. Between its brick walls were a collection of politicians, clergy, and philanthropists assembled "for the purpose of considering the expediency and practicability of ameliorating the condition of the Free Black People of Colour now in the United States."[24] The *National Intelligencer* played an important role in generating

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[22] Margaret Bayard Smith to Mrs. [Jane] Kirkpatrick, Dec. 5, 1816 reprinted in Gaillard Hunt, ed. *The First Forty Years of Washington Society, Portrayed by the Family Letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith (Margaret Bayard) From the Collection of Her Grandson, J. Henley Smith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 131.

[23] Jesse Torrey, Jr., *A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery, in the United States: with Reflections on the Practicability of Restoring the Moral Rights of the Slave, without impairing the Legal Privileges of the Possessor; and a Project of a Colonial Asylum for Free Persons of Colour; including Memoirs of Facts on the Interior Traffic in Slaves and on Kidnapping* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1817), 48-53.

interest in the colonization meeting.[25] On December 14, 1816, the paper published a report of a November 6 colonization meeting in Princeton, New Jersey, after which the paper printed the memorial to the New Jersey legislature. The same announcement appeared the same day in the Baltimore-based paper *Niles' Weekly Register*. News about colonization was spreading in and around the District of Columbia.

In response to its early reporting on colonization, a letter to the editor appeared in the December 17 issue, lauding the editors for bringing this subject to public attention. The writer, "Penn," proclaimed colonization to be "one of the most important and interesting subjects that ever claimed public attention."[26] The letter of Penn—likely a pseudonym for long-time colonization supporter William Thornton—continued the movement of bringing together the various discourses on slavery in support of colonization.[27]

Penn's structure for analyzing the subject of colonization was to consider two questions—"1st. will the free blacks consent to go to the new colony?" and "2dly. Can a territory be obtained?"[28] Penn's answers to these questions relied on appeals germane to the moral discourse of the time. Noting the "rights of man" and "the independence of their ancestors," Penn called upon "a Christian people [white Americans]" to act on

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[24] "Origin, Constitution, and Proceedings of the American Society for Colonising the Free People of Colour of the United States," Vol. 1, 1816, American Colonization Society Papers, Library of Congress, reel 289.

[25] After the formation of the Colonization Society, Gales aided in the management of the Society until he moved to Raleigh. Seaton also took on leadership roles in the organization. See Josephine Seaton, *William Winston Seaton of the "National Intelligencer." A Biographical Sketch. With Passing Notices of His Associates and Friends* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1871), 76, 264,

[26] *National Intelligencer*, December 17, 1816, n.p.

[27] P.J. Staudenraus opines that Penn was likely William Thornton. Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 26n8.

[28] *National Intelligencer*, December 17, 1816, n.p. Capitalization consistent with original.

colonization. Penn also noted the importance that government would play in this plan, reflecting the importance of political economic discourse as an alternative to security and morality discourses. Colonization supporters, Penn claimed, wanted "but the sanction of our government, and a well digested system to be presented to the country, to command the united, the almost unanimous support of the nation."[29] Penn's appeals to rights and independence (being part of the available moral rhetoric) and to the unified power of the national government (a dimension of the political economic rhetoric of the moment) helped the movement to gain broad-based support for colonization. Noticeably absent from Penn's letter, however, was the security rhetoric that appealed to many white Americans at the time. To best bring together the different discourses on slavery in support of colonization, the rhetors at the colonization meeting could not be silent on the subject of security as Penn had. Despite this oversight by Penn, the discourse before the meeting increasingly emphasized the unifying potential of a national colonization effort.

After Penn's letter, Caldwell and Key filled the *National Intelligencer* with publicity. In the December 18 issue, the advertisement requested that notice of the meeting be published in all papers in the District of Columbia, Baltimore, Annapolis, Fredericktown, and Fredericksburg. Both the December 18 and 21 advertisements invited "Gentlemen from all parts of the United States" to attend.[30] Colonization remained in the news near the nation's capital, with *Niles' Weekly Register*, a Baltimore paper, relaying news of the Virginia Assembly's closed-door session concerning the colonization of blacks. Upon removing the injunction of secrecy, the Assembly reported that a resolution had passed that instructed the governor to correspond with the President of the United

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[29] *National Intelligencer*, December 17, 1816, n.p.

[30] *National Intelligencer*, December 18, 1816, n.p. and *National Intelligencer*, December 21, 1816, n.p.

States about obtaining land "to serve as Asylum for such persons of colour, as are now free, and may desire the same."[31] Notices concerning the meeting and other colonization information printed in December positioned colonization as a national issue, one which the federal government ought to address. Although framed as such, those who could act on the issue—the political, social, and religious elite—were likely to be found in the immediate vicinity of the District of Columbia. Thus, the colonization meeting was considered as a site where men of vaunted stature would address a subject of national importance. Such characteristics would inform the discourse of the colonization meeting.

On the evening of the meeting, Henry Clay presided. The scheduled chair was to be Bushrod Washington, Supreme Court justice, nephew of George Washington and a man whose name the organizers counted on for notoriety. With Clay presiding, Caldwell became the featured speaker, a task originally assigned to Clay. John Randolph of Roanoke, Congressman Robert Wright of Maryland, and Francis Scott Key also made brief remarks at the meeting. Also in attendance that night were men such as Senator Robert H. Goldsborough of Maryland, Ferdinando Fairfax, a wealthy landowner and early supporter of colonization, Reverend Samuel J. Mills of Rhode Island, and Reverend William Meade of Virginia.[32] They represented wealthy philanthropists, men of politics, and religious leaders, bringing a diversity of motivations for supporting colonization.

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[31] As quoted in "Chronicle," *Niles' Weekly Register*, 275.

[32] According to Staudenraus, the attendees were: Elias B. Caldwell, Francis Scott Key, John Taylor, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John Randolph, Richard Bland Lee, Edmund I. Lee, Robert Wright, John Carlyle Herbert, John Lee, Robert H. Goldsborough, General Walter Jones, John I. Stull, Ferdinando Fairfax, Thomas Dougherty, Reverend William Meade, Reverend William H. Wilmer, Stephen B. Balch and Samuel J. Mills. Staudenraus offers no evidence of where this list comes from, but the account seems to originate in the *National Intelligencer*, December 31, 1816. The accuracy of Staudenraus's list is questionable, as those names Staudenraus listed appeared in the resolutions assigning future duties. One of those names listed, Bushrod Washington, we know to have not been present given the remarks of Henry Clay speaking to this point. Thus, it is possible that others assigned to such duties were not present.

Absent from the meeting were any people of color or women, a fact that would not go unnoticed in public discourse.

Attendees deliberated and voted to create an organization aimed at "collecting information" to aid Congress in creating a colony in Africa, or elsewhere.[33] The group reconvened on December 28, 1816, for the purpose of creating a constitution for the organization, electing officers, and drafting a memorial to Congress. With this memorial, dated January 1, 1817, and read in Congress on January 14, 1817, the men of the colonization meeting announced to U.S. lawmakers their intentions to quell the conflict of slavery by means of African colonization.

Mercer's support of colonization was informed by the perspective of the slaveholders and the desire to maintain an orderly, and thus productive, slave labor system. Finley's motivation for colonization drew upon the moral principles of natural rights and Christian good-will. It was not difficult to see that many agreed upon the end goal of colonization, but that the motivation for the end goal varied considerably. The discourses of security and morality had grown increasingly incompatible and, at times, hostile to one another. Support for colonization came down from the north and up from the south. Meeting in the middle—in the District of Columbia—was symbolic of how a national colonization effort would need to develop rhetorically in order to find a motivational strategy agreeable to the various groups that supported the general idea of colonization.

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[33] *National Intelligencer*, December 31, 1816.

This Project and Previous Studies of the Colonization Meeting and its Context

This project explores how the rhetorical strategies that motivate the Colonization Society's scheme attempted to overcome the discursive tensions of slavery. The colonization meeting was a pivotal event in the attempted transformation of the discourse on slavery. The political economic discourse, which the movement's focus on Congress encouraged, provided an alternative to the divisiveness of security and morality discourses on colonization. Within the political economic discourse, colonizationists found a complement of *moderate rhetorical strategies* that had helped foster some agreement on the issue of slavery in Congress. Ultimately, this project will argue that the use of moderate rhetoric to motivate the Colonization Society's efforts failed to overcome the discursive tensions of slavery.

Most studies of the colonization meeting frame it as one bookend of the colonization movement, downplaying the centrality of the event in establishing the motivation for a national colonization movement. By positioning the colonization meeting of 1816 as its conceptual center, this project explores how the rhetorical strategies of the colonizationists addressed the exigencies of a unique moment in the history of slavery and attempted to create compromise by transcending the tensions of slavery. Thus, this study attempts to answer two questions: 1) What do we know about the colonization meeting of 1816? and 2) What do we know about the context in which the meeting took place? To answer these questions, it is necessary to turn to the literature pertaining to the colonization meeting of 1816, the rhetorical studies significant to my project, and works concerning the general context in which the colonization meeting took place.

Scholarly works about the colonization meeting of December 21, 1816, have successfully assembled the historical details of the event. The most valuable study for the comprehension of the colonization convention, and the African colonization movement in general, is Philip J. Staudenraus's book, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865*.[34] Many scholars consider Staudenraus the most comprehensive and thorough chronicler of the meeting.[35] Though some readers have challenged where Staudenraus placed germinal impulse for the creation of the Society,[36] the book has been lauded as "the standard reference on [the African colonization movement]," and proved "a distinct improvement over the older work" on the subject.[37]

Prior to Staudenraus's book, works about colonization lacked the critical distance to provide a scholarly assessment. Histories of colonization dating from the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century looked appreciatively upon

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[34] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*.

[35] See E. David Cronon, "Review of P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865,*" *Journal of Southern History* 27 (1961): 543; and Wood Gray, "Review of P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865,*" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 345 (1963): 172.

[36] Douglas Egerton has argued that the typical account of the colonization meeting, echoed in Staudenraus, wrongly identifies Reverend Finley as the catalyst for the meeting. Instead, argued Egerton, Charles Fenton Mercer sparked the move for a national colonization by corresponding with Caldwell one year prior to Finley's first mention of colonization. This project takes Egerton's position, yet, also realizes that Finley's pamphlet was an important articulation of the religious reasons for colonization. Recognizing the discursive value of both Finley and Mercer furthers the claim of the present project, namely that arguments for colonization sought compromise from different factions in the slavery debate. See Egerton, "'It's Origin is Not a Little Curious,'" 107-119.

[37] The previous work on the subject to which Fladeland referred was Early Lee Fox, *The American Colonization Society 1817-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1919). Betty Fladeland, "Review of P. J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865*" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (1961): 521.

colonizationists' efforts to solve the problems of slavery.[38] Staudenraus was aware of the apologetic leanings of previous authors.[39]

Like the literature concerning the meeting, scholarship on the development of colonization sentiment before 1816 is a product of historians. Of such studies, the most insightful works demonstrate that colonization encompassed numerous perspectives from different geographic locales. Henry Noble Sherwood, for example, documents state and local colonization efforts before a national colonization effort was created.[40] Many scholars of colonization use the publication of Jefferson's 1787 book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, as their starting point.[41] In tracing what he called the "Taproots of Colonization," Staudenraus began with Jefferson's colonization scheme in *Notes* and detailed the idea of African colonization through the Quakers, mercantilists, Southern planters, free blacks, Northern evangelicals, and British philanthropists.[42] Sherwood's and Staudenraus's works demonstrate the diversity of colonization support prior to the meeting.

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[38] For examples of sympathetic interpretations of the colonization meeting, see Archibald Alexander, *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa* (1846; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969); Sherwood, "The Formation of the American Colonization Society;" Fox, *American Colonization Society*; Frederic Bancroft, "The Early Antislavery Movement and African Colonization," in *Frederic Bancroft: Historian*, Jacob E. Cooke, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 147-91.

[39] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 309. See also David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 94-95.

[40] The earliest efforts were termed "transportation," with the terms "deportation," "gradual emancipation," "manumission," "reexportation," and "colonization." Henry Noble Sherwood, "Early Negro Deportation Projects," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 1 (1916): 484-508.

[41] See Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement,* chap. 1; Kazanjian, *Colonizing Trick*, chap. 2; Allan Yarema, *American Colonization Society: An Avenue to Freedom?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), chap. 1.

[42] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, chap. 1.

Rhetorical studies of the colonization meeting or the development of colonization before 1816 are sparse. The most important rhetorical work on early colonization efforts, by Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, traced the development of the white founders' "minimalist notions of *equal liberty* and *equal representation*," one component of which was colonization.[43] Equality was an important concept in colonization arguments, specifically in morality discourse. Other rhetorical works concerning early colonization efforts concentrate on the ACS in the 1830s and beyond.[44] Such projects are instructive of colonization in the age of radical abolitionism, but they reveal very little about colonization rhetoric in the unique social and political context of the 1810s.

Additionally, some works in the field of rhetoric contribute to my project's understanding of the rhetorical practices in the early nineteenth century. Scholarship on the transformative rhetoric in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century U.S. context shows that the moderate rhetoric of colonization occurred at a moment of great possibility.[45] African American rhetoric in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

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[43] Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, "The Rhetoric of Equality and Expatriation of African Americans, 1776-1826," *Communication Studies* 42 (1991): 2. Condit and Lucaites expanded this analysis in Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African Word* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). The colonization meeting receives a passing mention in Ernest G. Bormann, *Forerunners of Black Power: The Rhetoric of Abolition* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 1.

[44] Some studies of colonization rhetoric in the 1830s and beyond include, Philip Wander, "Salvation Through Separation: The Image of the Negro in the American Colonization Society," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57 (1971): 57-67; Delandis R. Brown, "Free Blacks' Rhetorical Impact on African Colonization: The Emergence of Rhetorical Exigence," *Journal of Black Studies* 9 (1979): 251-265; Stephan Donald Julian, "Moral Agency in Rhetorical Controversy: A Study of Gradualism and Immediatism in American Antislavery Movements" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1994); Stephen H. Browne, "Textual Style and Radical Critique in William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization*," *Communication Studies* 47 (1996): 177-190; Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), chaps. 4 and 5.

[45] Jennifer R. Mercieca and James Arnt Aune, "A Vernacular Republican Rhetoric: William Manning's *Key of Libberty*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 119-143; and Stephen John Hartnett and Jennifer Rose Mercieca, "'Has Your Courage Rusted?': National Security and the Contested Norms of Republicanism in Post-Revolutionary America, 1798-1801," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9 (2006): 79-112.

centuries has received renewed attention, primarily through the works of Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish.[46] The work of Bacon and McClish illuminates African American rhetoric before the rise of radical abolition and the more well-known rhetorical performances Frederick Douglass and others. The transformative political rhetoric of the early nineteenth century and the dynamic rhetoric of African Americans during this period provide a rhetorical context in which the colonization meeting took place.

During the 1810s and 1820s, The United States was in a state of transition, shaping the motivational field for colonization. The monikers used to describe the time period from which the Colonization Society emerged include "the middle period," "the era of good feelings," "the neglected period of anti-slavery," and "the rain between the storms."[47] Henry Adams, in his history of the Jefferson and Madison administrations, illustrated the change in the United States' perspective after the War of 1812. "The continent lay before [Americans]," Adams states, "like an uncovered ore-bed."[48] Though a bit of an overstatement, Adams's comment captures the general feeling of expansion, nationalism, and growth that pervaded the late 1810s and 1820s. George Dangerfield writes, "The American people, in 1815, endeavored to turn their backs upon Europe,

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[46] Glen McClish, "William G. Allen's 'Orators and Oratory': Inventional Amalgamation, Pathos, and the Characterization of Violence in African –American Abolitionist Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35 (2005): 47-72; Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish, "Descendents of Africa, Sons of '76: Exploring Early African-American Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 36 (2006): 1-29; Glen McClish and Jacqueline Bacon, "'I am Full of Matter': A Rhetorical Analysis of Daniel Coker's *A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister*," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 29 (2006): 315-346; and Glen McClish, "A Man of Feeling, a Man of Colour: James Forten and the Rise of African American Deliberative Rhetoric," *Rhetorica* 25 (2007): 297-328.

[47] The scholarly works associated with each of these descriptors are, respectively: John W. Burgess, *The Middle Period: : 1817-1858* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1901); Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*; Adams, *Neglected Period of Anti-slavery*; and Matthew E. Mason "The Rain between the Storms: The Politics and Ideology of Slavery in the United States, 1808-1820" (PhD. diss, University of Maryland, 2002).

[48] Henry Adams, *A History of the United States of America During the Administration of Jefferson and Madison*, 9 vols. (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1889-91), 9: 173.

insofar as Europe represented the kind of world history they most detested."[49] As the symbolic end to the War of 1812, the negotiation of the Treaty of Ghent represented a chance for The United States "to grow up" and proceed in its aggressive expansion.[50] In the many scholarly characterizations of the post-war 1810s, the spirit of change pervades. From within the context of a changing nation came both optimism and fear of the future, both sentiments to be harnessed by the advocates of colonization.

In addition to addressing the transformations occurring during the 1810s, scholars have also recognized the anxiety of slavery that festered as U.S. identity changed. Rebecca Brooks Gruver describes an country that was at once unified and growing apart in the years following the end of the War of 1812.[51] Dangerfield notes the "odd irony" associated with titling the 1810s and 1820s as the "era of good feelings," for as soon as Americans could declare victory in the War of 1812, tensions rose.[52]

Alice Adams reminds us of three important features of antislavery sentiment in the years from 1808 until 1831. First, the early nineteenth century was not a "stagnant" but rather a robust time for antislavery activists. Second, Adams argues, "In the South the [antislavery] societies were more numerous [than the North], the members no less earnest, and the hatred of slavery no less bitter in the later than the earlier part of the period under discussion [1808-1831]."[53] Third, Adams complicates the matter of antislavery in the early nineteenth century, concluding that "it is difficult to calculate the

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[49] George Dangerfield, *The Awakening of American Nationalism: 1815-1828* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 1.

[50] Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 90.

[51] Gruver, *American Nationalism*, 249.

[52] Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 91.

[53] Adams, *Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery*, 250.

effective strength of this [antislavery] sentiment."[54] Thus, in the years preceding the colonization meeting, sectionalism began to emerge, but not so much that it ended antislavery societies in the South. Antislavery sentiment was present, but not so vocal as to make a notable difference in the debate over slavery at the time.

The literature concerning the colonization meeting treats the historical development of the meeting, some of the rhetorical forces at work, and the transitional nature of The United States in the early nineteenth century. This project extends these conversations in order to offer a cogent understanding of the rhetorical development of colonization: the tension, the possible solution, and the execution. Such insights are important to understanding a movement that attempted to solve the problem of slavery; tried to do so through moderate rhetorical strategies that might avoid discursive tension; garnered the support of many powerful men in The United States such as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Bushrod Washington and Presidents from Madison to Lincoln; and yet, ultimately failed in its efforts. Considering the tremendous energies devoted to the subject of slavery in the early nineteenth century and decades thereafter, the development and ultimate failure of colonization discourse has a provocative story that is worth understanding.

Outline of Study

The movement for African colonization emerged as the result of the convergence of long-developing problems of slavery and the unique opportunities of the moment. The structure of this project attends to both the general quality and the unique texture of

[54] Adams, *Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery*, 249.

slavery discourse implicated in the development of a national colonization movement. The story of colonization is, at its core, a drama in four parts.

In Part I, where the reader is currently situated, provided a glimpse into the meeting. The details of the meeting provide a sense that there was a problem in The United States and colonization supporters believed they could solve it with their scheme. The depth of that problem, the possibility for solving it, the moment of consummation, and the denoument are the subjects addressed throughout the remainder of this project.

Part II establishes the scene facing colonizationists: the growing tension within slavery discourse and potential rhetorical means to resolve that tension. Chapter One provides an understanding of the underlying rhetorical forces within which the discourse of U.S. slavery would develop. The struggle between supporters and opponents of the peculiar institution intensified with the growing tension between two discourses that framed slavery: a security discourse constructing the great fears that an end to slavery presented, and a moral discourse casting slavery as an evil that the society must purge from its character. If the nation was to resolve the slavery dilemma without breaking apart, this was the tension that would have to be rhetorically managed.

Chapter Two explores political economic discourse as a potential rhetorical alternative to the increasingly-contentious security and morality discourses. The unique character of political economic discourse resided as a confluence of rhetorical theory and practice within the moment. Scottish Enlightenment thinker Adam Smith tightly linked political economy—that is, the business of governing—to moderate rhetorical practices. The rhetorical practices described by Smith were expounded in U.S. political economic discourse. Beginning with the Articles of Confederation and continuing up to the time of

the colonization meeting, the use of moderate rhetoric in political economic discourse helped to create and maintain the Union. Moderate rhetoric was not without its flaws, yet it provided a timely and appropriate mode of address which colonizationists could use in their efforts to overcome discursive tensions, craft compromise, and solve the dilemma of slavery in The United States.

In Part III, we see how the theory and practice of moderate rhetoric were used to try to overcome the discursive tensions of the moment and advance the cause of colonization. Chapter Three attends to Henry Clay's opening remarks at the colonization meeting. Serving as chair of the meeting and being a notable public figure of the time, Clay's remarks helped to define the rhetorical motivations of the colonization movement. When his colonization remarks are juxtaposed with his prior rhetorical performances on subjects closely related to colonization, Clay's moderate rhetoric failed to provide the rhetorical force and political vision of his previous performances.

The featured oration of Elias B. Caldwell—the subject of Chapter Four—constituted the fullest declaration of the goals and motivations of the colonization meeting. In that speech, Caldwell's moderate rhetoric brought together many different appeals from the security and morality discourses. But, in doing so, he failed to merge the appeals in the service of a powerful statement aimed at overcoming the thrust of the security-morality tension.

Chapter Five turns to a third deployment of moderate rhetoric in which the rhetorical motivations established by Clay and Caldwell were redressed. In a "Counter Memorial" to be sent to Congress in opposition to the Colonization Society—the presumed clarity and prudence of colonization was called into question. The Counter

Memorial was a polysymous response to the moderate rhetoric of colonization, as it had many levels of interpretation. Taken individually or as a group, the multiple interpretations demonstrated the weakness of the moderate rhetoric used by colonizationists and, ultimately, the failure of moderate rhetoric to overcome the security-morality tension in slavery discourse.

Part IV of the colonization meeting drama traces the pragmatic and rhetorical legacies of the colonization meeting. Colonizationists attempted to generate a national program for colonization. To that end, the pragmatic legacy of colonization after the meeting is traced, including the number of free blacks removed, the political relevance of the Colonization Society over time, the history of the Liberia colony, and later iterations of the colonization movement. The colonization meeting also had rhetorical implications for future colonization efforts, specifically related to the legacy of the moderate rhetoric of colonization, and the legacy of the critiques against colonization. Despite the failure of the Colonization Society to solve the problem of slavery, the discourse of the Society played a significant role in the public debate over slavery in The United States.

Before radical abolitionism, before the Missouri Compromise, before gag rules on slave petitions in Congress, before efforts at Southern secession, before bleeding Kansas, before John Brown and Harpers Ferry, before the Emancipation Proclamation, and before the Civil War, colonizationists attempted to overcome the tension of slavery through moderate rhetoric and a national colonization project. The national colonization effort was forged in the context of immense discursive tension and limited, but plausible, rhetorical opportunities. By studying the rhetorical dynamics of colonization—the

obstacles, the opportunities, the execution, and the critiques—we can better understand the complexities of rhetoric and slavery in the United States.

PART II:

DISCURSIVE TENSION AND RHETORICAL POSSIBILITY IN U.S. SLAVERY DISCOURSE

In 1619, a Dutch man-o'-war sold twenty African slaves to colonists in Virginia. This event marked the beginning of African slavery in British North America. Over the next two centuries, the increase of slavery was accompanied by increasing discursive tension about the keeping of human chattel. Many rhetors defended the practice of slavery, arguing that it was natural and necessary to keep the dominant culture, that is elite whites, secure. Over time, however, an increasingly intense oppositional voice developed that decried slavery as immoral. The security-morality tension was not beyond relief. Within the legislative sphere, representatives from throughout The United States were able to deliberate on matters relating to slavery. Within political economic discourse, Americans developed the rhetorical resources to assuage the discursive tension of slavery. Chapter One traces the development of the tension between security and morality discourses, demonstrating the need for a rhetorical alternative that colonizationists sought to create. Chapter Two explains the rhetorical possibilities that developed within political economic discourse.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SECURITY-MORALITY TENSION IN SLAVERY DISCOURSE: INSTRUMENTAL RHETORIC, PATHETIC RHETORIC, AND THE COLONIZATIONISTS' DILEMMA

In 1800, word of a slave insurrection in Richmond spread throughout the United States. The anxiety inspired by this news invited a unique response from an anonymous Virginian in the form of a publicly circulated letter to a member of the Virginia General Assembly. "Here, then, is the true picture of our situation," the unnamed writer observed, "These [slaves], our hewers of wood and drawers of water, possess the physical power of doing us mischief; and are invited to it by motives which self-love dictates, which reason justifies."[1] As the Virginian noted, the "celestial spark" of freedom "is not extinguished in the bosom of the slave."[2] Recognizing that slaves were capable and justified in rebelling against slaveholders, the letter expressed concern that, "Our [elite white society's] sole security consists, then, in their ignorance of this power, and in their means of using it."[3]

The anxiety of the Virginian was reflective of a much larger tension in U.S. public discourse. Herbert Aptheker argues, "The dozen years following 1790 formed a period of more intense and widespread slave discontent than any that had preceded [it]."[4] The extent to which slaves were ignorant of their power diminished, aided by the increasing frequency and intensity of anti-slavery arguments. The American Revolution had

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[1] *Letter to a Member of the General Assembly of Virginia on the Subject of the Late Conspiracy of the Slaves; with a Proposal for their Colonization* (Baltimore: Bonsal & Niles, 1801), 7.

[2] *Letter to a Member*, 6.

[3] *Letter to a Member*, 7.

[4] Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943; New York: International Publishers, 1974), 209.

inflected anti-slavery discourse with a moral certitude, based in the rhetoric of natural rights, which emboldened resistance to the peculiar institution. In style and in substance, these arguments challenged the docility and calmness that white slaveholders coveted. Thomas Branagan's anti-slavery 1804 pamphlet illustrated the increasing intensity of moral arguments against slavery:

> To the mortification of philanthropy, to the grief of humanity, to the indignation of morality, and the astonishment of patriotism, the degrading tale must be told that in this country, where so much precious blood has been spilt in the cause of freedom, where so many heroic and patriotic lives have been sacrificed at the shrine of liberty, in this free country where our motto is *virtue, liberty, independence*. . . that these republicans whose bosoms glow at the name of liberty, who profess to be her most zealous votaries, and indefatigable defenders, in the commencement of the nineteenth century, have not only established, but consolidated the most horrid despotism, and riveted the chains of the most diabolical slavery, that ever tormented and disgraced the human species.[5]

If patriots and republicans spilt blood for the causes of liberty and freedom, why would slaves not do the same? The argument for natural rights, conveyed through vivid language, energized anti-slavery sentiment and challenged the calm order constructed by security discourse. Tensions mounted in public forums, as pro-slavery whites deliberated about ways to retain their security while slaves, free blacks, and anti-slavery whites levied moral challenges against the social order of slavery. Any attempt at change—such as colonization—would need to negotiate this tension.

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[5] Thomas Branagan, *Serious Remonstrances, Addressed to the Citizens of the Northern States, and Their Representatives: Being an Appeal to Their Natural Feelings & Common Sense* . . . (Philadelphia: Thomas Stiles, 1805), 25-26 (emphasis in original).

The evocativeness of the Virginian's letter of 1801 and Branagan's pamphlet of 1804 remind us of the multiple dimensions of rhetorical discourse. One dimension of rhetorical discourse is that it is instrumental. That is to say, rhetoric is what humans use, in particular situations, to accomplish a goal or purpose. To this point, Donald C. Bryant suggests that rhetoric is "the basic instrument for the creation of informed public opinion and the consequent expedient public action."[6] "Situational" serves as a sufficient summary term of the instrumental dimension of rhetoric, particularly from the perspective advanced by Lloyd Bitzer's conceptualization of the "rhetorical situation."[7] Another dimension of rhetorical discourse is the emotional, or pathetic, dimension. Pathos is generally connected with the grand style, with the aim being to excite, rather than to calm, emotions.[8] Instrumental and pathetic dimensions of rhetoric are not mutually exclusive—as situations can invite heightened emotion and emotion can be used to accomplish a discrete goal—however, within discourse, a particular dimension of rhetoric is likely to emerge as the primary force.

The variety of rhetoric can be seen in the Virginian's letter and Branagan's pamphlet. The Virginian's letter highlights the instrumental dimension of rhetoric, as the author's purpose was connected to the situation. The instrumental dimension of rhetoric became closely tied to security discourse, where white rhetors expressed concern about their safety within the context of a slave society. In the aftermath of Gabriel's rebellion, the pathos of the situation was enthymematic. The author need not remind the audience

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[6] Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Functions and its Scope," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 39 (1953): 410.

[7] Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14.

[8] Mary A. Grant and George C. Fiske, "Cicero's *Orator* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*, " *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 25 (1924): 34.

of the heightened tension that the insurrection created. They knew. Brought to the forefront was how actions could be taken to address the situation and restore order for the politically powerful white society. The letter was not devoid of emotional content, but the focus on the problems of the moment highlight the instrumental function that rhetoric can serve.

By contrast, Branagan's pamphlet highlighted the pathetic dimension of rhetoric in his denouncement of slavery. Unlike the letter, where action was motivated by a specific set of circumstances rooted in a moment, Branagan's pamphlet used the pathetic dimension of rhetoric to make a sweeping claim against all slavery. Branagan's pamphlet was part of an increasingly bold discourse that opposed slavery on moral grounds. In morality discourse, rhetors called attention to the violation of enduring principles, values, and rights caused by slavery. Contributing to this discourse, Branagan's call to action was not a response to a particular event; rather, Branagan used the expansiveness of pathetic rhetoric to address the broad spectrum of abuses caused by slavery. Branagan was certainly attempting to "use" rhetoric as an instrument for change; however, the scope of his appeal went beyond a narrow situation. Although discourse is not limited to one dimension of rhetoric, the Virginian's letter and Branagan's pamphlet help to demonstrate the ways that various rhetorical dimensions can be brought to the forefront.

In slavery discourse, the multiple dimensions of rhetoric were not independent of one another. Although security and morality discourses circulated with little antagonism in British North America's early colonial years, the different dimensions of rhetoric guiding each of these two discourses began to generate tension in the public discourse on slavery. These two dimensions of rhetoric sought to move rhetoric and slaves in opposite

directions: the instrumental rhetoric of security discourse valued control and boundaries, keeping slaves and rhetoric within a limited scope; while the pathetic rhetoric of morality discourse valued transcendence and effervescence, pushing against the barriers inscribed by the security discourse. The story of how the rhetorical relationship between security and morality discourses became increasingly tense is the province of this chapter.

Tracing the development of the security-morality tension in slavery discourse unfolds in four parts. First, security and morality discourses are shown to originate in agreement and not in opposition to one another, with both discourses approaching slavery with instrumental strategies. Next, the origins of the pathetic rhetorical approach to slavery are connected to morality discourse. Then, the focus turns to the injunction of the American Revolution and the way in which the security and morality discourses were transformed. Lastly, through the discourse of the War of 1812, the security-morality tension galvanized, creating the rhetorical situation that colonizationists would face as they advanced their plans. By the time the colonization meeting convened in 1816, colonization supporters faced long-developing discursive tensions and the dilemma of reconciling these tensions. The purpose of this chapter is to map the tension in British North American and, later, U.S. public discourse that colonizationists would need to overcome to gain widespread support.

Accommodating Slavery within Security and Morality Discourses: Instrumental Rhetoric and the Strategies of Containment and Deterrence

The British North American colonies were founded by peoples of two orientations. The pilgrims of the New England colonies came to pursue "an errand into

the wilderness," seeking a new beginning that would allow them to practice their religion as they thought God wanted.[9] By contrast, Virginia was founded by entrepreneurs and paupers who sought economic success in the New World. Although these two areas were founded by peoples of differing purposes, both colonies faced the same hardships associated with building a functioning colony. When slaves were introduced into the colonies, the colonists' reaction of reflected the complexities of the colonists' beliefs. Colonists were forced to consider slavery in relation to Christian principles, colonial industry, and everyday life. Colonial life was already fraught with difficulties—disease, famine, and conflict—and slavery added another layer of struggle.

As colonists considered how slavery fit in their everyday lives, there were far more similarities than differences in the ways that colonists rhetorically approached slavery. Forged at a time amidst great uncertainty, an instrumental rhetorical approach to slavery defined early discourses of slavery in British North America. The instrumental approach was manifested by two strategies in particular: the strategies of containment and deterrence. As this section will show, instrumental rhetorical strategies were important to how slavery was negotiated throughout both security and moral discourses during the early colonial years. Over time, however, pathetic rhetorical strategies developed through moral discourses and began to pose an alternate approach to slavery in the colonies.

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[9] See Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1956).

Instrumental Rhetoric in Security and Morality Discourse:

The Strategy of Containment

About the practice of slavery, one Virginian wrote, "In a word, if we will keep a ferocious monster in our country, we must keep him in chains."[10] The fear of insurrection by "a ferocious monster" led whites to devise ways to keep slaves in chains, both physically and rhetorically. One such strategy that developed to rhetorically control slaves was the strategy of silence. To be sure, the preference of most whites was that there be no discussion of slave insurrections, for the absence of this rhetoric would perhaps signify that there was no threat to their life and the established social order. The absence of discourse was instrumental in its rhetorical power, as whites could reason that the threat of insurrection was minimal if security discourse did not exist.

Although the stability of silence was the ideal for whites, it was indeed an ideal. More often, whites turned to strategies of containment to decrease the potential for insurrection and downplay any rumors of insurrection. Like the preference for silence, containment operated from the assumption that rhetoric was instrumental, because containment worked actively to use rhetoric to contain the immediate danger. The strategy of containment was used on a variety of topics in colonial British North America, most notably in the discussions of slave communication and education.

Whites recognized that slave insurrections were fostered through collective action and thus, created laws to limit the ability for slaves to organize. A 1680 law in Virginia made it illegal for slaves to assemble and was amended in 1682 to add that no slave from

[10] Quoted in Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 65.

one plantation could remain at another for more than four hours at a time.[11] After defeating a slave insurrection in 1723, Virginia Governor Hugh Drysdale used the opportunity to urge stronger laws against slaves, stating, "I am persuaded you are too well acquainted with the Cruel dispositions of these Creatures, when they have it in their power to destroy or distress, to let Slipp this faire opportunity of making more proper Laws against them."[12] Understanding that slaveholders could not monitor every action of the slaves, laws were also passed to create incentives for slaves to inform their masters of potential uprisings. In 1751, a South Carolina law provided a reward to any slave who provided information on attempts to poison a white master.[13] Such practices limited the ability of slaves to communicate, identify with each other's common plight, and unify against the people facilitating their oppression.

Accompanying the passage of laws were practices that encouraged containment of slaves. One such practice was to frame the potential allies of slaves as enemies, particularly American Indians. A persistent concern of whites was that the American Indian populations would bond with slaves and take-up arms together. As Merton L. Dillon notes, "Everything was done to prevent the two threatening groups from recognizing and taking advantage of their common interest," which led slaveholders to work diligently to frame Indians as an enemy of slaves.[14] Slaveholders also attempted to

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[11] H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*. 5 vols. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1925-1930), II: 35.

[12] William Maxwell, ed., *The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Notebook*, 6 vols. (Richmond, VA: 1851), IV: 63.

[13] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 143.

[14] Merton L. Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 6.

create divisions within the slave community by either making some slaves spies or personal assistants to the master, or by keeping slaves from their family or tribe.

Portents of the security-morality tension were evident when containment was incorporated into slaves' religious education. For Quakers, George Fox was the first to bring the problem of religious instruction and slavery to light. Fox broached the subject in a 1657 epistle, "To Friends beyond the sea that have Blacks and Indian Slaves." Fox's message did not decry slavery; it simply asked that slaves' religious instruction not be forgotten.[15] Similarly, Puritans argued that religious instruction of slaves ought to be of the utmost importance to colonists in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Richard Baxter's "Directions to Those Masters in Foreign Plantations Who Have Negroes and Other Slaves" a chapter in his *Christian Directory*, implored slaveholding British North American colonists, "Teach them the way to heaven, and do all for their souls which I have before directed you to do for all your other servants."[16] The pressure to instruct slaves was political, as well as moral, as French and Spanish settlers in British North America were liberal in their instruction of slaves. Such practices made religious instruction about international standing as well as maintaining a docile slave population.[17] If slaves were educated, would this lead to increased resistance to their condition? If Christians were to spread the gospel according to Jesus Christ, how could they not share

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[15] See Herbert Aptheker, "The Quakers and Negro Slavery," *Journal of Negro History* 25 (1940): 331-362.

[16] Richard Baxter, "Directions to Those Masters in Foreign Plantations Who Have Negroes and Other Slaves; Being a Solution of Several Cases about Them," *Christian Directory*, quoted in Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of Negroes in the United States* (Savannah, GA: Thomas Purse, 1844), 7.

[17] For example, as early as 1634, Jesuit missionaries in Canada sought to teach black slaves. See Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*. 2nd ed. (1919; repr. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968), 20.

the gospel with slaves? In morality discourse, questions such as these complicated the use of containment toward the religious instruction of slaves.

Despite such complexities, containment pervaded morality discourse in the pre-Revolutionary phase. Typically, when confronted by slaveholders, religious leaders made clear the limits of their outreach. While in Barbados, Quaker William Edmundson was brought before the governor and charged with stirring rebellion among the slaves by preaching to them. Edmundson's defense was to the contrary; that preaching to the slaves would make them Christian, thus calming their savage inclinations and preventing their rebellion.[18] During the 1740s George Whitefield, who converted many blacks to Christianity during his missionary work near Philadelphia, vigorously attacked the treatment of slaves while continuing to hold slaves himself. In an open letter to Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, Whitefield wrote, "I challenge the whole World to produce a single Instance of a Negroe's being made a thorough Christian, and thereby a worse servant."[19] Laws were even passed to clarify that baptism did not change one's condition, bondage, or freedom.[20]

While containment in security discourse sought to literally and symbolically contain the potential insurrection of slaves, containment in morality discourse at least sought to educate slaves in the process. Although some considered religious instruction a

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[18] Planters were careful to select slaves of different cultures, believing that without a common language it would be more difficult to organize and rebel. See Vincent T. Harlow, *A History of Barbados* (1926; repr. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 325.

[19] George Whitefield, "Letter III. To the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina," *Three Letters of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1740), 15.

[20] Helen T. Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*. 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926), I, 57. Similar laws were passed in Maryland (1671), New York (1706), and South Carolina (1712). Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's & Indians Advocated, Suing for their Admission into the church: Or a Persuasive to the Instructing and Baptizing if the Negro's and Indians in our Plantations. . . . To Which is added, A Brief Account of Religion in Virginia* (London, 1680), 61.

breach of containment, those who offered such instruction did so to ultimately achieve containment by fashioning a more docile slave population. Thus, both security and morality discourses employed the instrumental functions of containment.

The Strategy of Deterrence and Instrumental Rhetoric

When the strategy of containment seemed to fail—namely, when a slave insurrection was attempted or a rumor of an attempted revolt swelled—whites employed a strategy of deterrence in an attempt to restore order. Deterrence was similar to containment as both strategies were employed by whites to maintain and exert control over the slave class. The difference was defined by context and audience. The context for containment was that of relative calm and thus, the strategy was meant to keep slaves in their current state of containment. The context of deterrence was disorder, wherein the strategy focused on regaining social order that had been disrupted. The audience for containment was primarily whites, whereas the audience for deterrence included blacks.[21] Although the strategy of deterrence discussed the harsh punishments of black insurrectionists, such a strategy was also meant to reassure whites that order was being restored.

The distinguishing move of the deterrence strategy was the vivid description of the punishment inflicted upon insurrectionists. By spreading word of the horrific punishment of black insurrectionists, the general population was led to believe that order was being restored. In contrast to the strategy of containment—where control was attained through staunchly instrumental rhetorical strategies—the strategy of deterrence

[21] It should be noted that although containment and deterrence were aimed at different audiences, I am not suggesting that these were the only audiences who received the message. The boundaries of communication were quite permeable, even if not intended to be so.

called upon the pathetic power of language to overwhelm the energy that emanated from news of insurrections. It should be noted, however, that deterrence was a defensive strategy and only used at times of intense unrest. The white social order was not well-served to evoke intense emotions on the subject of slavery. To do so would disrupt the calm, orderly society that the strategy of containment aimed to create. Yet, when emotions intensified across white and black communities, the white social order saw a need to reassert its power and restore white security. Thus, pathetic rhetoric was used sparingly, and only for the purpose of returning a sense of order in which instrumental rhetoric thrived.

The strategy of deterrence played a marginal role in early morality discourse. Where deterrence was used in morality discourse it tended to be directed at deterring whites rather than blacks. For example, in 1630, a Virginia Court sentenced Hugh Davis to "be soundly whipped, before an assembly of Negroes and others, for abusing himself to dishonor and shame of Christians, by defiling his body and lying with a negroe; which fault he is to acknowledge next Sabbath day."[22] A decade later in Virginia, Robert Sweet (a white man) was required "to do penance in church according to the laws of England, for getting a negroe woman with child and the woman whipt."[23] Most reports of punishment of slaves lacked mention of Christian principles or moral reasoning. Instead, the strategy of deterrence found greatest usage in security discourse and, more specifically, in response to rumored or attempted insurrection.

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[22] William W. Henning, ed., *Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia*. 13 vols. (Richmond, 1809-23; repr. Charlottesville: Published for the Jamestown Foundation of the Commonwealth of Virginia by the University Press of Virginia, 1969), I: 146.

[23] Henning, *Statutes at Large*, I: 552. Though the syntax is unusual for a contemporary reader, this quotation states that the man was to do penance in church and the black woman was whipped for her role.

The strategy of deterrence depended upon the publicity of punishments. If silence and containment of slavery were challenged, and an insurrection occurred, then a forceful public response was used to reassert order. For example, during the New York insurrection of 1712, "The terror of black insurrection . . . ran like a fever through the white community." Once the New York insurrectionists were caught, the punishments inflicted were very public: "thirteen slaves died on the gallows, one was starved to death in chains, three were burned publicly at the stake, and one was broken on the wheel."[24] All of these punishments took place within the eye of the public. Additionally, details of the punishments were relayed in newspapers, most explicitly in Boston's *Weekly News-Letter*.[25] The deterrent force wielded by public punishments, such as those in New York, was known to the political elites in The United States. In a letter to the mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana Governor William Claiborne noted that if slaves on trial were convicted, he would punish them "in such a manner and at such places as may best serve to terrify those who may be inclined to commit similar enormities."[26] Deterrence was not the preferred strategy of slaveholding whites, as such a strategy brought to light the violent possibilities of slavery. Yet, in moments in which order needed to be restored—where neither silence nor containment would sufficiently restore calm and order—the strategy of deterrence proved necessary.

One of the assumptions of the strategy of deterrence was that, upon responding to the disorder of slave insurrections, it was possible to return to the previous order. Prior to

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[24] See also Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 172; Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 108; and Kenneth Scott, "The Slave Insurrection in New York in 1712," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 45 (1961): 43-74.

[25] Boston *Weekly Newsletter*, April 7-14, 1712.

[26] Quoted in Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 88.

the American Revolution, insurrections were largely isolated incidents. Pre-Revolution revolts were what Marion D. De B. Kilson refers to as vandalistic or opportunistic revolts.[27] Insurrections were not discussed as part of a larger political or ideological movement related to slavery. Instead, insurrections were discussed as pockets of rebellion where slaves sought their own freedom and not the destruction of the slave system. In the post-Revolutionary United States, transcendent principles, such as equality, liberty, and natural rights, began to connect insurrections and thus limited the potential for deterrence to contain slaves. Absent such principles, slaves were "pre-political" and were without "a specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world."[28] Yet, armed with principles that could unite slaves geographically and ideologically, slave insurrections could transform from isolated pockets of unrest to a widespread threat to the whites in power. Each insurrection would only embolden such principles and curry the pathetic rhetoric *against* slavery.

The New York slave insurrection of 1741 foreshadowed the discursive impact of the American Revolution and the diminished capacity of whites to regain control through the strategy of deterrence. The investigation and trial that followed the weeks of violence and fires throughout the city—a scene that led one colonist to refer to the situation as the "Bonfires of the Negros"— challenged the assumptions that slaves or rhetoric could be instrumentally controlled. The court record suggested that "tens and possibly hundreds of black men had been meeting secretly, gathering weapons and plotting to burn the city,

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[27] Marion D. De B. Kilson, "Towards Freedom: An Analysis of Slave Revolts in the United States," in *Freedom's Odyssey: African American History Essays from* Phylon, Alexa Benson Henderson and Janice Sumler-Edmond, eds., (Atlanta: Clark University Press, 1999), 63-76.

[28] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 2.

murder every white man, appoint [local tavern owner John] Hughson their king, and elect a slave named Caesar governor."[29] The ruling class of New Yorkers employed the strategy of deterrence by executing suspected slaves in a very public manner and spreading the word in print. Yet, such attempts to restore control proved challenging. The organization and principles that connected the New York conspirators spread beyond New York and the moment. As Jill Lepore argues, the conspirators were not bandits out for their own freedom and nothing more; rather, the "slaves suspected of conspiracy constituted both a phantom political party and an ever-threatening revolution."[30] While whites could previously contain or deter the potential of bodily harm, this insurrection demonstrated that whites were now confronted with the challenge of containing or deterring the growing political agency of blacks and the effervescent (and less controllable) concept of freedom. Although the American Revolution was decades away, the New York insurrection of 1741 provided a glimpse into how political consciousness could destabilize the instrumental strategies of white control.

Whites used the strategies of containment and deterrence to keep and restore order. These strategies reflected an instrumental approach to rhetoric that fit with the white slaveholder's desire to control slaves and discourse about slaves. Prior to the American Revolution, instrumental rhetorical strategies dominated both security and morality discourses. However, within morality discourse opposition to instrumentalism slowly gained voice.

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[29] Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2005), xvi.

[30] Lepore, *New York Burning*, xvi.

Portents of Discursive Tension: Morality Discourse, Pathetic Rhetoric, and the Initial Challenge to the Social Order of Slavery

Prior to the American Revolution, security and morality discourses approached slavery with similar arguments that highlighted the instrumental dimension of rhetoric. Although some considered slavery immoral, moral discourses tended to fall in line with the strategies of containment and deterrence. Despite the overwhelming presence of instrumental strategies prior to the Revolution, there were portents of the pathetic power that rhetoric could wield in morality discourse. Specifically, the use of empathetic appeals and an increasingly confrontational style undercut the instrumental control of rhetoric and slavery.

Challenging the Instrumental Rhetoric in Slavery Discourse through Empathetic Appeals

Empathy pervaded one of the first public challenges to slavery: the Germantown Friends' petition of April 1688.[31] That petition, created by a group of Dutch-speaking Mennonites and Quakers in Germantown, Pennsylvania, was submitted to a local Meeting of Friends.[32] The Germantown Friends' petition asked its readers to reflect upon the treatment of slaves, "Is there any that would be done or handled at the manner? Viz., to be sold or made a slave for all the time of his life?"[33] The empathetic appeal in the

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[31] To be clear, empathetic appeals were a particular strategy that conveyed the pathetic dimension of rhetoric.

[32] There were four names signed to the petition: "Garret henderich, derick up de graeff, Francis daniell Pastorious, Abraham up Den graef." "Germantown Friends' Protest against Slavery, 1688," reprinted in Roger Bruns, ed., *Am I Not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade of Revolutionary America, 1688-1788* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1977), 4 (Hereafter cited as Bruns).

[33] "Germantown Friends' Protest," 3.

petition was supported by reference to the Golden Rule. To wit "There is a saying, that we shall doe [sic] to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no differences of what generation, descent or colour they are."[34] Such an appeal confronted the sinful practice of slavery (although in less strident terms when compared to later attacks on slavery). The Friends equated the selling and keeping of slaves with more agreed-upon sins, such as adultery, stealing, and writing, "And we know that men must not comitt adultery,—some do commit adultery, in others, separating wives from their husbands and giving them to others."[35] Thus, slavery was not *like* adultery (or stealing); it *was* adultery (and stealing). The petition further pushed Quakers to justify the keeping slaves given the violence that slavery invited. Such an appeal resonated with the Quaker belief in pacifism.[36] As the petition sought empathy from their audience by asking Friends to consider themselves as slaves, it invoked both guilt and fear by demonstrating how slavery violated core Quaker principles.

The appeal to empathy of the Germantown Friends' petition was popularized in the mid-eighteenth century by Quaker John Woolman. Woolman's style privileged unity over division, which allowed him to critique slavery while avoiding personal criticism of his opponents.[37] In his heralded pamphlet, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*, Woolman reminded the reader that "that all Nations are of one Blood" and "that we are subject to the like Afflictions and Infirmities of Body, the like Disorders and Frailties in Mind, the like Temptations, the same Death, and the same Judgment." Most

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[34] "Germantown Friends' Protest," 3.

[35] "Germantown Friends' Protest," 4.

[36] "Germantown Friends' Protest," 4.

[37] Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 132.

importantly, Woolman unified human kind by arguing "that the Alwise Being is Judge and Lord over us all."[38] The relationship among humans as described by Woolman posited an equality of physical experiences, mental capacity, and standing before God. Such principles were the ideological underpinnings of the rhetoric of natural rights during the Revolution. Woolman omitted the phrase "natural rights" in the pamphlet; yet, that Woolman described natural rights rather than declared them illustrated the indirect style that Woolman used in addressing the evils of slaveholding. Additionally, the concept of "natural rights" had not yet gained the symbolic capital and ideographic quality that would imbue the phrase during the American Revolution. In style and substance, Woolman represented, at the very least, the appreciation of pathetic rhetoric as a way to bring together audiences against slavery, rather than to cultivate animus against slaves or slaveholders.

The empathetic appeals of the Germantown Friends and Woolman brought the evil of slavery to the surface, without making abrasive anti-slavery appeals. Despite their efforts, and a similar approach by Quaker George Keith in 1693, the Germantown Friends petition proved too aggressive in its pursuit of universal human equality. [39] After being presented at the meeting at Richard Worell's (a local, subordinate meeting of Friends), the petition was passed on to the Monthly Meeting at Dublin, Pennsylvania. The petition was subsequently passed all the way to the Yearly Meeting at Burlington, New Jersey, where the petition was deemed "not to be so proper for this Meeting."[40] Keith's *An*

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[38] John Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination*, excerpted in Bruns, 71.

[39] George Keith, *An Exhortation to Friends* (1693) reprinted in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 13 (1889): 268.

[40] "Yearly Meeting Minute on the above Protest," in Bruns, 4-5.

Exhortation to Friends put more pressure on Friends and their complicity with instrumental strategies of control, as he argued that not only should slaves be freed, "but being escaped from his Master, should have the Liberty to dwell amongst us, where it liketh him best."[41] Woolman's appeal to unity confronted slavery without confronting slaveholders. This approach avoided creating enemies, but it also failed to overcome the instrumental strategies that supported the slavery system. Many who opposed the slave trade (which was not akin to opposing all slavery) were supportive of repressive measures such as the Black Codes of 1700, which enacted harsher punishments on blacks than on whites for the same crime.[42] Although appeals to empathy did not shift attitudes within the immediate context, this pathetic strategy continued to develop in opposition to the instrumental rhetoric within security discourse.

Forcing the Anti-Slavery Position:

Pathetic Rhetoric and the Confrontational Style

Confronting the practice of slavery through public discourse was not necessarily a confrontational act. The empathy of the Germantown Friends and Woolman, which focused on the similarities between slaves and non-slaves, confronted the *issue* of slavery and not the *person* keeping slaves. Empathetic appeals showed how all people could agree that being a slave would not be a desirable condition in which to live, therefore slavery should not be practiced. Empathetic appeals moved to create unity among people

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[41] Keith, *Exhortation to Friends*, 268.

[42] James, *A People Among Peoples*, 115. Such equivocation also took place in protestant communities. For example, in Rhode Island (a colony that would become known for its strong anti-slavery inhabitants) a 1707 law required that a master accompany a slave who was visiting a free person. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 43.

that slavery should not be practiced. The confrontational style, by contrast, had radical aims and created "a dramatic sense of division."[43] In morality discourse, the key division was between right and wrong, moral and immoral. Guided by a sense of rightness, and in some cases, righteousness, the confrontational style did not seek unity as its primary aim. Rather, the denouncement of wrongs was the primary concern. The underlying instrumentalism of anti-slavery discourse was the same for those who appealed to empathy and those who were more confrontational in tone: the goal was the end to slavery. However, the way that emotion was evoked to advocate for that goal was quite different.

The first published anti-slavery pamphlet in British North America initiated the confrontational challenge to slavery. Samuel Sewall, a Puritan, served as a judge on the Massachusetts Superior Court and it was in this capacity that he took notice of the hypocrisy of Christian slaveholders and worked to create such a sense of division.[44] In 1700, he published *The Selling of Joseph, a Memorial*, where the confrontational style was deployed.

Sewall's dramatic usage of the confrontational style was achieved through two moves. First, unlike the Germantown Friends' inferences to biblical principles, Sewall quoted the Bible in the Puritan style, providing explicit citations to book, chapter, and verse. For example, a basic premise of Sewall's argument against slavery was that in the time of Adam slavery did not exist, thus slavery was not a natural condition authorized by God. To this point, Sewall wrote,

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[43] Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55 (1969): 2.

[44] In Court, Sewall was at odds with John Saffin, a wealthy gentleman who sought to violate the terms of an agreement that called for the release of a slave.

> God hath given the Earth [with all its commodities] unto the Sons of Adam, Psal., 115, 16. And hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the bounds of their Habitation: That they should seek the Lord. Forasmuch then as we are the Offspring of God, &c. Acts 17. 26, 27, 29."[45]

The Biblical evidence led Sewall to conclude, "So that Originally, and Naturally, there is no such thing as Slavery."[46] This explicit clinch of his argument reinforced the confrontational nature of his style. Sewall's second move was similar to the Germantown Friends' petition as it compared slavery to other crimes. As slavery was not original and natural, Sewall contended that slavery was akin to stealing, a crime "ranked among the most atrocious of Capital Crimes." Describing the crime as "atrocious" reflected Sewall's moral certitude. In style, the specific citations and moral certitude differed from the sense of deference created in the more general statements against slavery offered by the Germantown Friends.

The second move in Sewall's confrontational style was the explicit refutation of pro-slavery arguments. He identified the standard pro-slavery arguments—most of which were based in Christian theology—answering each objection with reference to books, chapters, and verses from the Bible. Sewall's use of the refutative form (i.e., identify claim, respond to claim, provide evidence for the response) proved more brazen than the Germantown Friends' petition. Rather than implying the opposing claims in his arguments, as was the case with the Germantown Friends, Sewall made the opposition's

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[45] Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph a Memorial* (Boston: Bartholomew Green and John Allen, 1700), 1 (brackets in original; emphasis removed).

[46] Sewall, *Selling of Joseph*, 1.

arguments clear, his responses clear, and his biblical justifications clear. For example, Sewall wrote the following in response to the pro-slavery argument that slavery took blacks out of a pagan nation:

> Obj. 2. *The* Nigers *are brought out of Pagan Country, into places where the Gospel is Preached*.
>
> *Answ*. Evil must not be done, that good may come of it. The extraordinary and comprehensive Benefit accruing to the Church of God, and to *Joseph* personally, did not rectify his brethrens Sale of him.[47]

Sewall's clear arguments against slavery could potentially invite similarly obvious and clear responses to *The Selling of Joseph*. Moving beyond the gradual and vague antislavery opinions of the previous generation, Sewall's piercing argumentation presaged the anti-slavery discourse of generations to come.

Sewall's style appeared quite hostile in relation to the Germantown Friends or Woolman. However, the confrontational style characteristic of Sewell's pamphlet grew more intense in later moral discourses against slavery. For example, in 1714, John Hepburn, a native of Great Britain living in New Jersey, published *American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule*. In that pamphlet, Hepburn berated the U.S. Quaker community for not uniformly opposing slavery. Hepburn developed a biting description of slaveholders as self-interested, image-conscious elites who

> can afford to keep themselves with white hands, except at some Times they chance to be besparkled with the Blood of those poor Slaves, when they fall to beating them with their twisted Hides and Horse-whips, . . . to go with fine

[47] Sewall, *Selling of Joseph*, 2-3. Although this example lacks citation to a particular biblical verse, Objections 1, 3, and 4 all contained explicit citation of book, chapter and verse. Objection 2 was selected as an example for its swiftness in illustrating the refutational style.

> powdered Perri-ivigs, and great bunched Coats; and likewise keep their Wives idle (Jezebel-like) to paint their Faces, and Puff, and powder their Hair, and to bring up their Sons and Daughters in Idleness and Wantonness, and in all manner of Pride and Prodigality, in decking and adorning their Carkasses . . . All, and much more, the miserable Effects produced by the Slavery of the Negroes.[48]

Hepburn's vivid imagery of stark whiteness with only the occasional dirtying of the hands and clothes more graphically chastised the slaveholder than previous rhetors.

Ralph Sandiford and Benjamin Lay extended Hepburn's confrontational style in criticizing slavery and slaveholders. Sandiford was an Englishman who, after living in Pennsylvania for one year, became mortified by the slave auctions and wrote *A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times*. The 1729 pamphlet used the same types of arguments Hepburn used to critique slavery *and* slaveholders.[49] Sandiford brought the critique of slaveholders to its logical completion, arguing that the keeping of slaves proved that ministers, elders, and religious leaders possessed no spiritual gift.[50] Benjamin Lay's criticism followed in the same vain as Sandiford, writing,

> [W]e appear very Religious and Demure, Preaching against Iniquity and Vice; they appear to be what they are . . . how does our Demure Slave-Keepers remember them that are in Bonds as bound with 'em, except as Slaves are bound to them, so they to the Devil, and stronger, for as Death loosens one, it fastens the other in eternal Torments if not repented and forsaken.[51]

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[48] John Hepburn, *American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule*. . . (1714), excerpted in Bruns, 19.

[49] See James, *A People Among People*, 121.

[50] James, *A People Among Peoples*, 24

Sandiford's and Lay's confrontational style aided their development of prophetic personae. Historian David Brion David explains, "Modeling themselves on Isaiah and Jeremiah, the antislavery prophets knew that the devil could not be intimidated by sweet language. . . But the antislavery martyrs took courage in the thought that they stood with such men of the past as Fox and Keith."[52] As prophets for the antislavery cause, Sandiford and Lay were emboldened to harshly criticize slaveholders in order to fight the devil.

Such courage led to dramatic performances against slavery in Quaker meetings and public spaces.[53] With this prophetic persona, devotion to the truth proved more important than creating unities or identification with slaveholders. As a result, Sandiford and Lay created intense divisions with slaveholders while believing in the eternal truth of the antislavery position. Sandiford and Lay boldly attacked their religious brethren for their complicity in slavery, a move that ultimately, led to the expulsion of each from the Society of Friends. Their attacks on the "Demure" façade of Quaker preaching were also an attack on the strategy of containment that was so important to security discourse and early morality discourse.

The empathetic appeals and confrontational style did not go unnoticed by proslavery whites who preferred the control afforded by instrumental rhetorical strategies. The most enduring response for the next century was a rather simple counter

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[51] Benjamin Lay, *All Slave-Keepers, That keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1737), 114, 119.

[52] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957), 325.

[53] Such performances by Lay included wearing military clothes to meetings, rigging Bibles to bleed (he used pokeberry juice), and baring an uncovered foot in the snow to induce interactions with slaveholders (when passers by asked if his foot was cold, Lay responded that his foot was no colder than the hearts of slaveholders). Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 324.

claim to moral attacks on slavery; namely, that slavery was biblically justifiable. For example, Rev. Thomas Bacon of Maryland advised a congregation of Episcopal slaves that "Almighty God hath been pleased to make you slaves here, and to give you nothing but Labour and Poverty in this world."[54] Bacon told the slaves that their owners were "GOD'S OVERSEERS."[55] Rhetors also justified bondage on Earth by focusing on the life hereafter. Bacon preached, "If you desire *Freedom*, serve the Lord here, and you shall be his *Freemen* in Heaven hereafter."[56] No longer was the question whether to educate the slaves. The debate had shifted to the far more poignant and essential question of whether slavery was morally and biblically justified. On this question, the discursive tension between the instrumental rhetoric of control and the pathetic rhetoric of freedom became more intensely contested.

Opposition to the instrumental approach to slavery developed slowly within morality discourse. Through appeals to empathy and the confrontational style, pathetic rhetorical strategies were cultivated to challenge the control afforded by instrumental strategies. Within morality discourse the barriers between races and classes were being blurred, an unsettling rhetorical phenomenon for proslavery advocates who relied upon strict boundaries to keep slavery functional. Thus, the security-morality tension mounted as the rumblings of the American Revolution began.

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[54] Thomas Bacon, *Two Sermons Preached to a Congregation of Black Slaves, at the Parish Church of S.P. in the Province of Maryland* (1749; repr. London: n.p., 1782), 12.

[55] Bacon, *Two Sermons*, 28 (emphasis in original).

[56] Bacon, *Two Sermons*, 69 (emphasis in original).

The Age of Revolution and Natural Rights:

Catalyzing the Security-Morality Tension

The year 1760 marked the beginnings of rhetorical transformations that intensified the security-morality tension.[57] Violent slave revolts occurred in the British Caribbean, and antislavery literature was on the rise.[58] Most importantly, however, was the battle to be waged by American Patriots against the British government. Security discourse retained a prominent and powerful place in public life, but took on new meaning with Patriot rhetors definition of colonists as "slaves" fighting the British "master." The slavery metaphor, Peter A. Dorsey notes, was a "fluid concept that had a major impact on the way early Americans thought about their political future as well as the future of chattel slavery." The slavery metaphor "destabilized previously accepted categories of thought about politics, race, and the early republic."[59]

Yet, it was the transformation of morality discourse that was the hallmark of the Revolutionary Era. With the Revolution came a secular morality that challenged the instrumental strategies of slavery discourse. "Natural rights," a dominant theme of the Revolutionary Ideology that pervaded the United States (and later, France), came to mean that all humans were equal and should be free. Such claims were made in religiously-based morality discourse, but the connection between natural rights and the fight for

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[57] See Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 112.

[58] David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 141.

[59] Peter A. Dorsey, "To 'Corroborate Our Own Claims': Public Positioning and the Slavery Metaphor in Revolutionary America," *American Quarterly* 55 (2003): 355. See also Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 4, 63; and David K. O'Rourke, *How America's First Settlers Invented Chattel Slavery: Dehumanizing Native Americans and Africans with Language, Laws, Guns, and Religion* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), chap. 1.

sovereignty allowed for moral arguments rooted in the common experience of becoming the United States of America. Within the crucible of the American Revolution, the pathetic rhetorical approach to slavery expanded. The expansion of the pathetic rhetorical approach can be seen in two ways. First, the scope of the moral discourse spread beyond religion to encompass the more secular, but still powerful, appeals to natural rights. Second, such a powerful rhetorical force could not be contained within U.S. borders, as the pathetic rhetorical appeals within morality discourse were used more frequently and more forcefully to challenge the control of the slave labor system.

Expanding the Scope of Morality Discourse:

Natural Rights, Slavery, and the American Revolution

As British North American colonists became more dissatisfied with the colonial rule of Great Britain, the language of natural rights emerged as a way for colonists to claim autonomy from London. As James Otis wrote in 1764, in one of the initial salvos against the government in London, "In order to form an idea of the natural rights of the colonists, I presume it will be granted that they are men, the common children of the same Creator with their brethren of Great Britain."[60] But the appeal to natural rights, almost by definition, could not be limited only to the political situation with Britain. As Otis wrote, "The colonists are by the law of nature freeborn, as indeed all men are, white or black."[61] Unlike previous anti-slavery advocates, Otis's argument was primarily focused on the political slavery of white colonists and not the chattel slavery of blacks.

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[60] James Otis, *Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*, (Boston, 1764), in Bruns, 103.

[61] Otis, *Rights of the British Colonies*, 104.

More important to the motivational thrust was that similar to previous anti-slavery advocates, Otis drew authority from God as the guarantor of rights.

As tensions between colony and empire escalated, arguments about the consistent application of natural rights increased in public forums. Anti-slavery advocates exposed the hypocrisy of colonists' both holding slaves and demanding rights from Britain. Boston merchant Nathaniel Appleton, writing in 1767, made such an appeal:

> Oh! Ye sons of liberty, pause a moment, give me your ear, Is your conduct consistent? can you review our late struggles for liberty, and think of the slave-trade at the same time, and not blush? Methinks were you an African, I could see you blush. How should we have been confounded and struck dumb, had Great Britain thrown this inconsistency in our faces? how justly might they, and all mankind have laughed at our pretensions to any just sentiments of Liberty, or even humanity?[62]

Unlike Appleton, who simply asked for his audience to examine their own conduct, others demanded action to rectify the hypocrisy. In 1769, Rev. Samuel Webster of Salisbury, Massachusetts, urged followers to "break every yoke and let these oppressed ones *go free without delay*—let them taste the sweets of that *liberty*, which we so highly prize, and are so earnestly supplicating God and man to grant us: nay, which we claim as the natural right of every man."[63] As the Revolution drew closer, North Church pastor Nathaniel Niles of Newbury, Massachusetts, stated, "God gave us liberty, and we

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[62] Nathaniel Appleton, *Considerations on Slavery in a Letter to a Friend* (Boston, 1767) repr. in Bruns, 136.

[63] Samuel Webster, *An Earnest Address to My Country on Slavery* (1769), quoted in H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But. . . : Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972), 18.

enslaved our fellow-men. . . For shame, let us either cease to enslave our fellow-men, or else let us cease to complain about those who enslave us."[64] The fervor of revolution and the hypocrisy of its discourse infused the morality discourse on chattel slavery with renewing energy.

The expansiveness of natural rights rhetoric, the critiques of slavery that motivated the Patriot rhetoric, and the momentum of change in U.S. culture reduced the barriers to opposing slavery. As a result, numerous religious sects that were previously silent or ambivalent towards slavery began opposing the practice. American Methodism, whose leader John Wesley was inspired by Quaker Anthony Benezet, drafted and passed statements urging emancipation at a 1780 conference in Baltimore. The Methodist Conference held that slavery was "contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature."[65] In 1784, Methodist circuit riders voted to expel members of the church who sold or bought slaves for "nonhumanitarian reasons."[66] In 1787, Charles Carroll, a member of the Catholic faith, supported emancipation in Maryland. Baptist opposition to slavery came after the Revolution as well, with a 1785 acknowledgement from the Baptist General Committee that slavery was against the word of God.[67] The antislavery sentiment among Baptists demonstrated that the moral dissent against slavery was not confined to the northeast, as approximately half of all Baptists resided in Virginia, Kentucky, North

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[64] Nathaniel Niles, *Two Discourses on Liberty: Delivered at the North Church, in Newburyport, on Lord's Day, June 5th, 1774. . .* (Newburyport, MA: n.p., 1774), Discourse I: 38-39.

[65] Quoted in Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America*, 41.

[66] Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 8-9.

[67] Smith, *In His Image, But. . .*, 47-48.

Carolina, and South Carolina.[68] For Presbyterians, communion against slavery began after the American Revolution commenced.[69] Even among Friends, the Revolutionary era fostered greater determination against slavery, with the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting being nearly slaveholder free by 1779.[70] Natural rights rhetoric and the revolutionary zeal of the 1770s and 1780s provided an opportunity and a language by which reluctant Christians were empowered to oppose slavery.

The rhetoric of natural rights not only provided whites with a language to challenge instrumental strategies of control, slaves and free blacks were also empowered by the language of natural rights. The intense emotional associations with slave insurrections that made the metaphor so powerful in fighting the Revolution were turned loose on the domestic practice of slavery. The dominant history of the American Revolution tells the tale of the British (and the American Loyalists) against the American Patriots. Yet, the American Revolution, remarks historian Sylvia R. Frey, was not simply between the white Americans and the white British. Rather, the revolution was a complex "triangulation" between two groups of white "belligerents" and approximately four hundred thousand slaves.[71]

The Revolution forced unities and divisions in U.S. society that were previously untenable. Slaveholders were faced with the choice of whether or not to allow slaves to fight for the Patriot cause. As Ira Berlin notes, "The War for American Independence in particular gave slaves new leverage in their struggle with their owners, offering the

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[68] Smith, *In His Image, But. . .*, 47-48.

[69] Smith, *In His Image, But. . .*, 55.

[70] James, *A People Among Peoples*, 227.

[71] Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 45.

opportunity to challenge both the institution of chattel bondage and the allied structures of white supremacy."[72] Slaves throughout the colonies were aware of the presence of British forces and devised plans to find "the enemy" to gain freedom.[73] The participation of slaves in the political revolution in British North America brought slaves into a realm where they had not been allowed previously. To remove slaves from this domain and return them to a life of servile dependence further challenged the instrumentalist approach of the politically-powerful whites in society.

Whites throughout the Northern colonies wavered on the issue of black service in the Patriot army. Local, state, and continental laws opened and closed the enlistment of black soldiers many times before the summer of 1776.[74] As the Revolution progressed, white colonists in the North, a minority of whom actively supported the war, realized that the troop shortages "highlighted the advantages, if not the necessity of enlisting blacks as troops."[75] With state troop enlistment quotas and the substitution system (e.g., for every black man serving a white man stayed home), the enlistment of blacks gained acceptance in the North. In exchange for service, some states offered emancipation or manumission. The relationship between blacks and whites in the North during the Revolution was far from ideal, yet, it marked a turning point. The freedom and political agency afforded to and asserted by blacks broke through the containment strategy that the discourse of slave revolts sustained. The participation of blacks in a different revolt helped to shift rhetoric away from fear and anxiety and more toward liberty and equality.

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[72] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 219.

[73] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts,* 88.

[74] Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 1-18.

[75] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 147.

Below the Potomac River, slaveholders heatedly debated proposals to enlist their slaves in combat.[76] The political debate over arming slaves brought forward slaveholders in favor of the proposition, most notably George Washington, South Carolina representative to the Continental Congress Henry Laurens, and his son John Laurens. The Continental Congress unanimously approved enlisting and arming slaves from South Carolina and Georgia. The South Carolina and Georgia legislatures rejected the proposal and held strong to the containment logic. The South attempted to maintain their slave system, yet the Revolution forced a division between slaveholding and nonslaveholding whites. The concept of slavery "rested upon the unity of the planter class and its ability to mobilize the state and rally nonslaveholders to slavery's defense."[77] Still, the presence of a debate about enlisting slaves in the military represented a shift in the containment of slaves and the language about slavery. The debate had shifted from punishing and restricting the actions of slaves to exploring their freedom. Such a move placed the pathetic rhetorical strategies from morality discourse at odds with the instrumental approach of the security discourse.

Seizing upon the rhetoric of natural rights and the use of slaves in Patriot forces, British authorities also exposed the failure of the strategy of containment. Lord Dunmore, the Royal Governor in Virginia realized the military, economic, and symbolic power of gaining the favor of black slaves. In April of 1775, Dunmore "threatened that he would proclaim liberty to the slaves and reduce Williamsburg to ashes if the colonists resorted to force against British authority."[78] Whites and blacks were aware of the power of this

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[76] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 148.

[77] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 219.

offer. For example, in North Carolina, blacks planned to rebel and retreat to the frontier where they believed British Loyalists would receive them with open arms.[79] John Adams noted in his diary on November 24, 1775, that two Southern delegates to the Continental Congress, Archibald Bulloch and John Houston, were concerned that the British would fight under an antislavery banner and that this message would get to the slaves. These men remarked that, "The Negroes have a wonderful art of communicating intelligence among themselves; it will run several hundreds of miles in a week or a fortnight."[80] In the build up to the Revolution one understands that the concerns of Bulloch and Houston were not misplaced. In November of 1774, for example, an uprising in St Andrew's Parrish, Georgia, occurred, "possibly stimulated by the excitement that was at the moment running through all of the colonies."[81] Dunmore, Bulloch, and Houston recognized that gaining the adherence of slaves was of great value in the war. Slaves represented military and economic strength. If the British could convince slaves to cross the battle lines or flee from their owners, the Loyalist cause would simultaneously gain military strength and decrease both the military and economic strength of the Patriots.

In many respects, the containment strategy employed before the Revolution never died in the Lower South. But it was tested. The revolutionary fervor that developed in the mid 1770s served as a warning to most slaveholders that harsher restrictions were needed to avoid slave revolts. "As nowhere else on the North American continent," Berlin writes, "the War for American Independence in the Lower South became a bitter civil war, filled

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[78] Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 73.

[79] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 88.

[80] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 21.

[81] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 201.

with a savage, fratricidal violence that tore at the fabric of society."[82] Rumors of slave revolts persisted in the Lower South, with the Revolution bringing increased concern due to the new divisions between Patriots and Loyalists. The slaveholders of the Lower South, more than the North and Upper South, continued to employ the strategy of containment. Some planters moved their slaves to more remote areas to avoid slave revolts or flight. The Loyalist slaveholders, as well as many Patriot slaveholders, in the Lower South considered the language of the Declaration of Independence a threat to the maintenance of the slave system. Some slaves fled from their masters, with most headed for urban areas or in search of British forces to join. But these fugitives served only to intensify the slaveholders' fear of slave revolt and insurrection.[83]

The rhetoric of natural rights presented competing exigencies for whites. In one sense, such rhetoric was a powerful motivational force used to rally colonists against the British. Yet, natural rights created another problem: it threatened the instrumental strategies used by pro-slavery whites to maintain order. The rhetoric of natural rights and participation of blacks in the war transgressed the barriers established by the instrumental strategy. Thus, the spread of natural rights rhetoric further compromised the instrumental strategy of containment.

Compromised Social Order:

Slave Insurrections and the Spread of Pathetic Rhetoric

The domestic application of natural rights that successfully marshaled troops to fight against the British provided a new rhetorical strategy for antislavery advocates and

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[82] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 291.

[83] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 291.

created a new problem for proslavery whites. The natural rights philosophy of the Declaration of Independence was applied to slavery even before Independence was won. On January 13, 1777, Prince Hall and seven other blacks petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for their freedom. The petition cited the war with Britain and the Declaration as a warrant for the petition, stating, "[The Petitioners] Cannot but express their Astonishment that It has Never Bin Considered that Every Principle in which Amarica has Acted in the Cours of their unhappy Difficultes with Great Briton Pleads Stronger than A thousand arguments in favowrs of your petitioners."[84] The Pennsylvania Assembly used the patriot logic to pass the first gradual emancipation law on March 1, 1780. Section one of that law argued that the "abhorrence of that condition, to which the arms and tyranny of Great Britain were exerted to reduce us" had made the Pennsylvanians aware of the importance of freedom and the "duty. . . to extend a portion of that freedom to others."[85] The same application of the principles of the Declaration continued after Patriots had won independence. On October 4, 1783, over five hundred members of the Society of Friends petitioned the Continental Congress to end the slave trade based on the "solemn declarations often repeated in favor of universal liberty."[86]

The legal application of natural rights rhetoric gained momentum from the rise of black secular organizations after the war. These groups emerged from urban contexts, but were not specific to the North. Examples of such groups include the African Union Society of Newport, Rhode Island (1780), Free African Society of Philadelphia (1787), Brown Fellowship Society (Charlestown, SC, 1790), African Society of Providence,

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[84] "Petition of Prince Hall and Other Blacks, January 13, 1777," in Bruns, 428.

[85] "The Pennsylvania Abolition Law, Introduced November 2, 1779," in Bruns, 446.

[86] "Quaker Petition to the Continental Congress, October 4, 1783," in Bruns, 495.

Rhode Island (1793), African Society of Boston (1796), and the Friendly Society of St. Thomas (Philadelphia, 1797). Blacks organized, met, and discussed the pressing issues of the time. Such organized political action by blacks helped resist the strategies of containment and deterrence that allowed the slave system to operate.

The legal and political application of the Revolutionary ideology seemed to ease the tension of slave revolts, as the 1780s saw a decrease in reported slave revolt conspiracies.[87] Exercising political agency and wielding the powerful symbols of liberty and equality, blacks began to fight not only *for* personal freedom, but also *against* the system of slavery in the United States. Legal and political battles against slavery never waned, yet the degree to which such institutional means were a substitute for violence was short lived. When the promise of liberty and equality failed to come to fruition after the Revolution, insurrections again became viable solutions for slaves. Two insurrections were particularly debilitating to the instrumental strategies of security discourse: The rebellion on the island of Saint-Domingue and the slave insurrection conspiracy of 1800 in Charleston, South Carolina.

The slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti) validated the use of pathetic rhetoric, showing that the fight for natural rights could be fought and won by slaves. The Saint-Domingue rebellion also increased the demand for slaveholders to restore order generated by instrumental rhetorical strategies. As a territory of France, Saint-Domingue was impacted by the spread of revolutionary ideals from the United States across the Atlantic. In France, the revolutionary spirit manifested in the fall of the Bastille on July 14, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man on August 26, 1789. In the French Declaration, a pronouncement of equality, similar to the American Declaration,

[87] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 206.

stated, "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights." The French Declaration exacerbated political, social, and economic tensions on the island nation of Saint-Domingue.[88] By 1791, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Vincent Ogé, Jean-Baptiste Chavannes, and André Rigaud among others, had produced the largest slave uprising in modern history. As David P. Geggus notes, the Saint-Domingue slave rebellion brought about the first wholesale emancipation of a major slave society (1793), the granting of full racial equality in a U.S. colony (1792), and the first independent nation in Latin America (1804).[89] At just over one-thousand miles from South Carolina, the proximity of the events in Saint-Domingue and their aftermath significantly impacted American colonists, white and black.

With such a tremendous challenge to the institution of slavery so close to the United States, the tension between security and morality discourses grew. The words "Santo Domingo," when spoken in the United States, "evoked at least a moment of alarm and terror in the minds of slaveholders throughout the Americas."[90] The sentiment permeated federal and local politics. On December 23, 1793, a letter from Thomas Jefferson (then secretary of state) to Governor John Drayton of South Carolina communicated that two Frenchmen from "St. Domingue" were setting out for Charleston with the intent to excite the slaves.[91] In 1801, Secretary of State James Madison was

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[88] David Brion Davis, "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, David P. Geggus, ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 4. For a full account of the situation in Saint-Domingue, see C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: The Dial Press, 1938).

[89] David P. Geggus "Preface" in Geggus, ed. *Impact of the Haitian Revolution*, ix.

[90] Davis, "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," 4-5.

[91] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 42-43.

careful to tell Robert Livingston, the newly appointed U.S. minister to France, to beware of Southern slaves learning that the French were their allies.[92]

In the United States, the increased anxiety led to a redoubled emphasis on containment. Officials attempted to censor any word of the uprising and passed legislation to prohibit the importation (or immigration) of non-whites from Saint-Domingue.[93] Similar fears pervaded local efforts in the South. In 1792, South Carolina banned the importation of African and West Indian (which included Saint-Domingue) slaves. Maryland, North Carolina, and Kentucky passed similar laws.[94] In 1803, South Carolina reopened the African slave trade, yet maintained a ban on West Indian slaves.[95] The same year, North Carolina sent a memorial to Congress regarding the recent arrival of free blacks from Guadeloupe (another West Indian island). The memorial reported a feeling of "much danger to the peace and safety of the people of the Southern States of the Union," to which the House committee considering the petition agreed: "[t]he system of policy stated in the said memorial to exist, and to be now pursued in the French colonial governments, of the West Indies, is fraught with danger to the peace and safety of the United States."[96] Anti-slavery advocates also used the Saint-Domingue revolution as evidence, yet for a different claim. Thomas Branagan, a reformed slave trader and opponent of slavery, warned that if slaves were not freed and colonized west, then blacks

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[92] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 29.

[93] Simon Newman argues that the Saint-Domingue revolution accounts, in part, for the growing conservatism in American political culture. See Simon P. Newman, "American Political Culture and the French and Haitian Revolutions," in Geggus, ed. *Impact of the Haitian Revolution*, 72-89.

[94] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 73-74.

[95] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (1896; repr. Williamstown, MA: Corner House, 1970), 71-72.

[96] *Annals of Congress*, 7th Cong, 2nd Sess., 385-6; 424.

would enact another Saint-Domingue.[97] Saint-Domingue was a weighty symbol of the power of slaves--one that fueled the tensions in U.S. slavery discourse.

For blacks, particularly those enslaved, the practical example of Saint-Domingue made its way into their considerations of revolts. The frequency of slave revolts and conspiracies in the United States increased in the 1790s, with the largest rebellions occurring in the forty years after the Saint-Domingue rebellion.[98] In 1793, an anonymous white man in Virginia filed a deposition after spying on blacks, recalling, "The one who seemed to be the chief speaker said, you see how the blacks has killed the whites in the French Island and took it a while ago."[99] Although documentary evidence of slave conversations is hard to come by, James Sidbury argues that slaves in Virginia during the 1790s used the events in Saint-Domingue to forge a new interpretation of "*frenchness* as a metaphor for their own notions of race, revolution, and freedom."[100] Decades later, James Forten, a man of means and a free black, explained that Saint-Domingue was an exemplar of how blacks "would become a great nation" because they "could not always be detained in their present bondage."[101] For slaves in the United States, particularly in the South, "[I]t was the spirit of the Declaration of Independence—accessible to any slave who heard political campaign rhetoric—and the legend of L'Ouverture that

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[97] Branagan, *Serious Remonstrances*, 15-17, 46-47, 78-79.

[98] Geggus, "Preface," xii.

[99] William P. Palmer and Samuel McRae, eds., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts From January 1, 1799, to December 31, 1807; Preserved in the Capitol, at Richmond*, vol. VI (Richmond, VA: H. W. Flournoy, 1890; repr. New York: Kraus, 1968), 452-53, (hereafter cited as *CVSP*).

[100] James Sidbury, "Saint Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790-1800," *Journal of Southern History* 63 (1997): 534 (emphasis in original).

[101] Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 50.

provided the intellectual foundations for true antislavery violence."[102] The American Revolution provided the language and the political agency, while Saint-Domingue provided the exemplary case for slaves to fight their oppression.

The fears of antislavery violence further intensified in 1800, when a domestic slave revolt demonstrated the bloody potential manifested by the security-morality tension. The slave revolt conspiracy was led by Gabriel, a slave of Thomas Prosser, in Richmond, Virginia. The insurrection was planned for August 30, 1800, with an expected army of two thousand slaves prepared to take-up arms against the whites of Richmond.[103] Were it not for a terrible rainstorm that washed out the bridge connecting Prosser's blacksmith shop in the woods to Richmond, as well as the information provided by the slave Pharoah to the white planter Mosby Sheppard, the revolt would have been more than simply a conspiracy.[104] In the immediate aftermath of the failed insurrection, a court convened on September 11 to begin trying the conspirators. Gabriel was captured in Norfolk, Virginia on September 23, returned to Richmond, summarily convicted and sentenced to hang. Gabriel's hanging was delayed until October 9, in hopes that he would elaborate on his plot and implicate all of his co-conspirators. Neither Gabriel, nor any of the men sentenced to hang, confessed or expanded upon the plot. On October 9, Gabriel was hanged, joining thirty-six other men who had been executed for their role in the conspiracy.

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[102] John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold, eds., *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 5.

[103] These numbers come from the testimony of the Ben, a slave of Thomas Prosser, in the trial against the slave Solomon on September 11, 1800. "Evidence Against the Negroes Tried September 11th," in *CVSP*, IX, 141.

[104] "Mosby Sheppard to the Governor," in *CVSP*, IX, 134; Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1993), 70-71.

"Gabriel's Rebellion" actualized the fears of Saint-Domingue within U.S. borders. Like Saint-Domingue, Gabriel's plot escalated slaveholding society's fears because of the expansive potential of the event. Unlike most previous slave revolt plots, particularly those before the American Revolution, John R McKivigan and Stanley Harrold note that Gabriel's insurrection clearly contemplated "*political* violence."[105] Like the revolt in Saint-Domingue, Gabriel was not seeking to flee from the area, but sought to overthrow the slave system and create a new government. Another one of Prosser's slaves, Ben, provided testimony that illuminated this dimension of the plot. Gabriel's plan was to begin with the murder of Prosser and the "White Neighbors." The group was then "to repair to Richmond and Seize upon the Arms and Ammunition."[106]

The politics of antislavery were present in Gabriel's planning, as Ben later testified that "all whites were to be massacred, except the Quakers, the Methodists, and the Frenchmen, and they were spared on account as the conceived of their being friendly to liberty, and also they had understood that the French were at war with this country for the money that was due them."[107] This was not to be an opportunistic revolt; rather, the plans were well organized. Ben relayed details of such organization, stating that "Solomon was to be Treasurer" of the group and that Gabriel and Solomon kept a list of names of the conspirators.[108] The duration of the plot further emphasized the level of organization, as Ben recalled that Solomon, a blacksmith, had begun fashioning swords during the previous harvest. The purpose, targets, and organization of Gabriel's rebellion

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[105] McKivigan and Harrold, *Antislavery Violence*, 6.

[106] "Evidence Against the Negroes Tried September 11th," *CVSP*, IX, 141.

[107] "Confessions of Ben alias Ben Woolfolk," *CVSP*, IX, 152.

[108] "Evidence Against the Negroes Tried September 11th," *CVSP*, IX, 141.

revealed a politically aware, if not politically motivated, leader seeking to overthrow the slave system in order to create a new, black-led government.

In Richmond, the rhetorical aftermath of Gabriel's rebellion saw whites attempting to restore order through instrumental rhetoric. As with the slave revolts before 1760, the white response turned to containment and deterrence: lawmakers attempted to downplay the rebellion in public statements while demonstrating concern by legislating harsh laws against slaves. In a letter to Jefferson, Virginia Governor James Monroe wrote, "It is unquestionably the most serious and formidable conspiracy we have ever known of the kind." Yet, once the conspiracy became known to the government, the strategy of deterrence was enacted where, as Monroe stated, "We then made a display of our force and measure of defense."[109] The same distressed hubris was demonstrated again in the *New York Gazette* of September 18, 1800, which quoted from a Richmond paper, "the plot has been entirely exploded, which was shallow; and had an attempt been made to carry it into execution, but little resistance would have been required to render the scheme entirely abortive."[110] Monroe explicitly directed the Virginia Assembly to downplay Gabriel's plot in order to allow time for defense measures to be put into place.[111]

Beyond Richmond, reaction to the failed plot was also defined by instrumental rhetorical strategies. In Massachusetts many free blacks were ordered out of the state following word of Gabriel's rebellion, as free blacks were seen as the greatest challenge

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[109] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, September 15, 1800 in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson. Volume 32: 1 June 1800 to 16 February1801*, Barbara B. Oberg, ed., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 144-45.

[110] *New York Gazette*, September 18, 1800. This information is also quoted over sixty years later in Thomas Higginson, "Gabriel's Defeat," *The Atlantic Monthly* 10 (1862): 339.

[111] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 157.

to the perpetuation of the slave system. In another move to contain slaves and their communication, a slave code was passed in South Carolina that restricted the movement of slaves.[112] Despite legislation to bolster white security, the importance of reinforcing a sense of order in public statements proved paramount. Federalists claimed that the insurrection, and its French connections, demonstrated the problem with electing the Republican Jefferson with his known ties to France.[113] Jefferson, too, was aware of the need to manage public perception of the event. In a letter to Monroe on Sept 20, 1800, Jefferson wrote, "The other states & the world at large will forever condemn us if we indulge the principle of revenge, or go one step beyond absolute necessity. They cannot lose sight of the rights of the two parties, & the object of the unsuccessful one."[114] Containment and deterrence served as the stock responses to insurrection. Yet, as Jefferson realized, the situation was more complicated.

Gabriel's rebellion represented a key moment for security discourse after the American Revolution, for it demonstrated the erosion of key rhetorical strategies used to alleviate white fear of insurrection. First, Gabriel's rebellion and the discourse concerning security nearly extinguished anti-slavery activities in the South. As David Brion Davis posits, Gabriel's "well-organized slave conspiracy" proved to be the "critical event that helped to paralyze antislavery zeal in the South." Davis goes on to state, "By 1806, few ties remained between the southern antislavery societies and the larger 'parent' groups in Philadelphia and New York." [115] Second, and more generally, Gabriel's rebellion

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[112] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 226.

[113] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 150-51.

[114] Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson. Volume VII: 1795-1801*, Paul Leicester Ford, ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896). 458.

illustrated the rhetorical situation within the United States of the early nineteenth century: pro-slavery whites called upon the strategies of the past in order to manage the problems of security and slavery in the present, whereas, blacks and anti-slavery advocates called upon the more recent and powerful resources of the Revolution in order to fight slavery.

Renewing Revolutionary Time:
The War of 1812 and the Reinvigoration of Discursive Tension

The War of 1812 presented elements of permanence and change concerning the discourse of slavery. As had been done in the American Revolution, Americans turned to emotionally charged language of slavery to motivate a war with Britain. As before, such language helped to motivate whites to support the war, but also invited increased resistance from chattel slaves within U.S. borders. One difference from previous rhetorical efforts was that Americans, white and black, had experienced the American Revolution. This experience led to greater awareness of the repercussions of war on slavery. In particular, the security-morality tension grew with war hysteria. Another difference was the status of the United States at the conclusion of the War of 1812. Unlike the Revolution, the perceived U.S. victory was not followed by the business of building a nation, but by a heightened sense of U.S. nationalism. The rhetorical situation created by the War of 1812 galvanized the security-morality tension in slavery discourse. This was the situation that colonizationists would face as they articulated the need for colonization.

The War of 1812 employed the highly emotive meanings associated with slavery to motivate war with Great Britain. During the American Revolution, many Patriot

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[115] Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 210.

rhetors described the relationship between the Great Britain and the colonies as one of master and slave. In the build-up to the War of 1812, the issue was not the relationship between sovereign and colony, but the impressments of U.S. seamen by the powerful Royal Navy of Great Britain. The need for strong naval forces led British naval officers to board U.S. frigates to find British deserters and expatriates. These searches often led the impressments into service of native-born Americans. As Matthew Mason notes, the problem of impressments "had long been a diplomatic sticking point" and had brought the two nations close to war on a number of occasions.[116] When the two nations were brought to war in 1812, both sides took use of the rhetorical power of the term slavery.

Like the American Revolution, many important American rhetors used the metaphor of slavery to describe the British practice of impressments. For example, Madison compared Britain's policies to the slave trade, stating that "such an outrage on all decency was never before heard of even on the shores of Africa."[117] Hezekiah Niles, editor and publisher in of *The Weekly Register* in Baltimore, opined that impressments, "has no parallel either for atrocity or extent, in any thing of modern times, but the business of Negro-stealing on the coasts of unfortunate Africa."[118] John Quincy Adams echoed these sentiments, calling impressments "as oppressive and tyrannical as the slave

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[116] Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 87.

[117] James Madison to Albert Gallatin, July 28, 1809, quoted in Henry Adams, *History of the United States during the Administrations of James Madison* (1889-91; repr. New York: Library of America, 1986), 81.

[118] *The Weekly Register*, April 18, 1812, 119.

trade."[119] Americans had fought against the "slavery" of the British once before and their discourse concerning impressments suggested that they would do it again.

It was not surprising that government denouncement of "slavery" impacted the practice of chattel slavery. As had occurred during the Revolution, thousands of slaves fled for British ships in hopes of gaining their freedom. Other slaves sought to exploit the situation for the purpose of rebellion and uprising. In 1812 and 1813, large-scale conspiracies in Virginia were thwarted.[120] Rumors of revolt spread whenever British forces neared, as was the case in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1814.[121] In the immediate context, these plots and rumors were handled in the same manner as earlier slave rebellions. As had occurred during the Revolution, slaveholders attempted to contain and minimize the problem. For example, an 1814 slave rebellion scheme in Frederick, Maryland, was referred to in the newspapers as "The Little Plot."[122] The rhetorical containment of slave insurrections continued, particularly in the South, but such containment was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. The use of the metaphor of slavery could not be limited only to white audiences. As had occurred previously in the United States, explicit attacks on slavery led to heightened tension in discourse.

The newest deployment of anti-slavery discourse (as it related to both chattel and political slavery) impacted the U.S. rhetorical culture in both familiar and new ways. In a

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[119] John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*. Charles Francis Adams, ed., 12 vols. (1874-1877; repr. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 2: 422.

[120] Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 107-09.

[121] Anthony S. Pitch, *The Burning of Washington: The British Invasion of 1814* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 128-29, 151.

[122] *Enquirer* (Richmond), August 27, 1814, n.p.; and *National Intelligencer*, August 24, 1814, n.p.

manner similar to the Revolution, Americans could unite against the common foe of Great Britain and speak of the problems of "slavery." And, like before, a rash of pathetic rhetoric against chattel slavery ensued. With victory, one would then expect many rhetors to attempt to restore a social order in which slavery was contained and not laden with such emotion. Unique to the post-War of 1812 situation was that there was no need to turn to the business of creating a nation.

Unique to the rhetorical situation after the War of 1812 was the new sense of nationalism and internationalism. Unlike the years after the Revolution, Americans did not have to transition into the mode of nation building. This time, Americans had claimed victory in war as a sovereign nation. As a result, William Warren Sweet writes, "[Americans] had come to believe that no longer was their country merely a temporary experiment in popular government which the nations of the Old World could flout and bully as they pleased." Sweet continues, "Economically. . . the new nation had achieved a degree of stability and the leading statesmen were concerning themselves with measures that would bind the nation more firmly together into an economic, political, and social unity."[123] Donald L. Robinson adds, "With the end of the War of 1812, consumers whose appetites had gone unsatisfied for several years, owing to embargoes, blockades, and internal disruptions, now sought manufactured items with great intensity."[124] The United States had arrived on the international scene, a situation that expanded—both geographically and economically—the range of possible governmental actions.

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[123] William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 1952), 237.

[124] Donald L. Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971),282.

Conclusion: Security and Morality, Incommensurate

Prior to the American Revolution, instrumental rhetorical strategies provided the dominant mode of discussing slavery. The Revolution elevated pathetic rhetorical strategies in slavery discourse to a prominence to challenge the instrumental strategies. The rhetorical movement of these two approaches to slavery worked in opposite directions. Instrumental rhetoric pushed inward for the purpose of maintaining control. Pathetic rhetoric pushed outward, looking to break the instrumental control that subjugated blacks as slaves. For decades, the tension between instrumental and pathetic dimensions of rhetoric festered. The long trajectory of such tension would only increase the difficulty of resolving this conflict.

The tension between instrumental and pathetic dimensions of rhetoric was laid bare in the aftermath of the War of 1812. Peter Onuf judges that before 1815 (the end of the War), Americans were more concerned about "foreign manipulation of the 'clashing jurisdictions and jarring interests' of widely dispersed and doubtfully loyal frontier settlements" than they were about the internal practice of slavery. Such interference, Onuf claims, was seen as "the clearest and most present danger to the union."[125] Yet, the end of the War of 1812 turned attention inward, to the domestic problems that had been neglected in the name of an international threat.

Within the U.S. borders, the nation and its rhetors faced a daunting situation. Seeing the promises of the Revolution unfulfilled, rebellious activities among slaves rose

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[125] Peter S. Onuf, "The Expanding Union," in *Devising Liberty: Preserving and Creating Freedom in the New American Republic*, David Thomas Konig, ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 78.

from 1810 to 1816.[126] Fear of insurrection spread to new corners of a still-expanding United States. The population of slaves was again on the upswing after a decade where the free population had grown faster than the enslaved.[127] By 1816, the potential for insurrection had only grown with the population of slaves and the proliferation of natural rights rhetoric in the United States. The increase in slave insurrections was a symptom of the tension that was calcifying in public discourse. Rhetors who addressed the problem of slavery faced the difficult task of arguing about slavery without fueling the tension and unrest. Fueling unrest, whether in favor or opposition to slavery, risked the tenuous union created between states with increasingly divergent perspectives on slavery. Such unrest was the goal of some. But for those who sought to maintain the union, the security-morality tension would need to be overcome. Absent a rhetorical alternative, the security-morality tension would only foster more unrest throughout the United States.

What might such an alternative be? The letter from the anonymous Virginian to the Virginia General Assembly provided some insight. Any solution must occur through "moderation and humanity," the letter observed.[128] The Virginian argued that the plan that best fit those standards, and could avoid the security-morality tension, was colonization. The moderate rhetorical strategies that could support such a plan had been developing with political economic discourse and are the subject of the next chapter.

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[126] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 244.

[127] Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 60.

[128] *Letter to a Member*, 19.

CHAPTER TWO

A RESOLUTION TO THE SECURITY-MORALITY TENSION?: POLITICAL ECONOMIC DISCOURSE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERATE RHETORIC

In 1804, William Thornton drafted a pamphlet in the form of a letter to a friend, titled, *Political Economy: Founded in Justice and Humanity*. The pamphlet addressed the practices of the legislator and suggested that individuals currently in political office "be not unmindful of the welfare of futurity." "The legislator," Thornton reminded his friend, "would be sunk in apathy" if the demands of the present impeded consideration of the future. Such short sightedness was not characteristic of Americans, as it was Americans who, "declared to the whole world in their great charter of independence, that every man is equally entitled to the protection of life, liberty, and property." Despite the general title of the pamphlet and the expansiveness of his initial statements, Thornton's particular interest in political economy was narrowed to the question of "how the negroes are still in slavery?"[1]

Thornton's emphasis on the political economy of slavery was appropriate in the context of early-nineteenth-century U.S. politics. Slavery was perhaps the most complicated subject on which legislators deliberated. The tension between security and morality discourses had been developing well-before the United States came into existence. Since the introduction of slaves into British North America, elite whites used the instrumental dimension of rhetoric to maintain the security of whites and the system

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[1] William Thornton, *Political Economy: Founded in Justice and Humanity* (Washington: Samuel Harrison Smith, 1804), 3.

of slavery. Over time, the moral discourse against slavery developed, creating an increasingly intense counterpoint to the dominant security discourse. Through morality discourse, rhetors challenged slavery by highlighting the pathetic dimension of rhetoric. The tension between security and morality discourse cultivated the problem of slavery that legislators would seek to solve.

Legislators were not immune to the tension between security and morality discourses concerning slavery. To the contrary, the deliberative forum further complicated the tension. In Congress, rhetors were charged with representing their state, while also creating policy for the Union. The rhetorical situation facing legislators was complex. Thomas Jefferson noted the difficulties of the legislator, stating, "In so complicated a science as political economy, no one axiom can be laid down as wise and expedient for all times and circumstances, and for their contraries."[2] Extending Jefferson's sentiment to the realm of slavery discourse, the complexities of political economy encouraged legislators to deliberate, and thus engage other positions on slavery. Because of the added element of deliberation, which was not endemic of public discourse beyond the legislative arena, political economic discourse on slavery took on different rhetorical dimensions.

The different rhetorical dimensions of political economic discourse had the potential to address the security-morality tension. Where the security and morality discourses created divisions in society, political economy had the potential to bring together discursive commitments. As Drew R. McCoy explains, "The concept of 'political economy,' as distinct from 'economics,' is particularly symbolic of this eighteenth-century

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[2] Jefferson to Benjamin Austin, Jan. 9, 1816, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh, eds., 20 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, 1903-1904), 14: 392.

fusion of empirical science and ethical concerns."[3] Where instrumental and pathetic rhetoric had grown contentious in public discourse on slavery, those same rhetorical approaches were merged within political economic discourse. Thus, a different dimension of rhetoric was brought to the surface in political economic discourse on slavery, the moderate dimension of rhetoric.

The moderate dimension of rhetoric emphasized the role of reasoning and process in rhetorical practice. The ends of that process could be instrumental or pathetic, so long as the rhetor used sound reasoning to arrive at the eventual conclusion. The development of the moderate dimension of rhetoric in political economic discourse offered the potential to overcome the security-morality tension. Aiming to relieve the tensions of slavery in the United States through a widely supported scheme, rhetors at the colonization meeting would attempt to harness the power of moderate rhetoric to motivate their efforts. Before turning to the speeches at the colonization meeting and the use of moderation to motivate their efforts, the rhetorical potential of moderation toward slavery will be explored.

To understand the development of the moderate dimension of rhetoric within political economic discourse, this chapter will first, explain the importance of moderation in both the study of political economy and rhetoric in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. From an understanding of how moderate rhetoric and political economy relate, the chapter then traces the development of moderate rhetoric within U.S. political economic discourse, beginning with the need for moderation that emerged from the debates concerning the Articles of Confederation and slavery. Next, the potential for

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[3] Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 7.

moderate rhetoric to overcome the security-morality tension in slavery discourse is analyzed in the context of the 1787 Federal Convention and the creation of the Constitution. The moderate rhetoric that helped create agreement on the Constitution is illustrated in its full voice during the 1806 and 1807 debates concerning the end of the international slave trade. Finally, having established the need, potential, and efficacy of moderate rhetoric in political economic discourse related to slavery, this chapter concludes by showing how political economic discourse, moderate rhetoric, and colonization could potentially come together to address the security-morality tension in the discourse on slavery.

Considering Political Economy Rhetorically:
Adam Smith and the Moderate Dimension of Rhetoric

When British North America transformed from a collection of British colonies to a sovereign nation, the subject of slavery also changed. To grapple with the role of slavery in the United States, and not just in individual states, U.S. statesmen looked to writings of the Scottish Enlightenment. There, colonists found a language to make sense of their new status as a nation.[4] Americans found further resonance with the Scottish Enlightenment's efforts to avoid the abuses and excesses of British rule. No writer of the Scottish Enlightenment was of greater importance than Adam Smith.[5] A significant element of Smith's intellectual project and its connection to a U.S. audience was his

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[4] David Lundberg and Henry May, "The Enlightened Reader in America," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 271.

[5] Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 50-66.

praise of moderation.[6] In what follows, the centrality of moderation is first shown in Smith's conception of political economy and the connection to the United States. Then, Smith's moderation can be seen as a linkage between political economy and rhetorical practice.

Smith's Political Economy in the United States:

Moderation through Self-Interest and Self-lessness

Moderation permeated Smith's theory of political economy in his appreciation of both self-interest and self-lessness as legitimate motivations in governance. Smith is most widely known for his landmark work in economics, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (hereafter, *Wealth of Nations*). First published in 1776, the popular text had already been reprinted six times by 1791. In *Wealth of Nations*, Smith defined political economy as "the science of a legislator, whose deliberations ought to be governed by general principles which are always the same" (IV.ii.39). Although Smith's definition of political economy seemed to suggest a lack of moderation in the notion that the principles "are always the same," Smith's explanation of such "science" and "principles" shows his moderate disposition. For example, Smith proposed that social interests were best served when the sovereign (i.e., federal government) did not regulate "the industry of private people" (IV.ii.9); however, the sovereign did have a role in defense, justice, and unprofitable, but necessary, public works (IV. ix. 51).[7] As Warren J.

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[6] Charles Griswold Jr., *Adam Smith and the Virtues of the Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 286.

[7] All citations to Smith's *Wealth of Nations* use the standardized citation format of Book, chapter, section, and paragraph. The text referenced is Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd, eds., 2 vols. *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

Samuels points out, Smith attempted to offer a systematic handling "of freedom *and* control and continuity *and* change."[8] Smith's brand of political economy sought a balance between private industry and the role of the nation-state in the accumulation of wealth.

Smith's writings on political economy, and moral philosophy in general, connected with British North American colonists. Samuel Fleischacker describes Smith's economic treatise *Wealth of Nations*, as "a very 'American' book" on account of its relevance to public issues in British North America and its reception by the political elite.[9] In *Wealth of Nations*, Smith suggested a union between Britain and the colonies in which the colonists gained full-voting rights in Parliament. Smith also praised agrarianism and, with Pennsylvania as a model, argued for the separation of church and state.[10] Furthermore, Smith's appreciation of the value of freedom in an economic system aligned with America's war for independence. In progressing from a feudal economic system to capitalism, he wrote that the removal of the attributes of slavery will make individuals "really free in our present sense of the word Freedom" (III. iii. 5). Although one might interpret Smith's statement as anti-slavery, in the rhetorical context of the American Revolution his statement speaks more to the Patriot cause, and their rhetorical fashioning of colonists as slaves to the British government, than as a statement against chattel slavery.[11] Through explicit references to the British North American colonies, as

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[8] Warren J. Samuels, "The Political Economy Adam Smith," *Ethics* 87 (1977): 191.

[9] Samuel Fleischacker, "Adam Smith's Reception among the American Founders, 1776-1790," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (2002): 903.

[10] Fleischacker, "Adam Smith's Reception," 903-4.

[11] Smith seemed skeptical of his own proclamation about the power of capitalism, stating elsewhere that "the love of domination and authority and the pleasure that men take in having everything done by their express order . . . will make it impossible for the slaves in a free country ever to recover their liberty."

well as appeals to colonial values such as agrarianism and freedom, Smith's political economy was consistent with the situation in the colonies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Smith's literary connection with the British North American situation gained traction with notable American political leaders. On June 14, 1807, Thomas Jefferson wrote that on the subjects of money and commerce, "Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is the best book to be read."[12] Jefferson was not alone in his high praise of the text. Noah Webster wrote that he "devour[ed]" *Wealth of Nations* during the Spring of 1784."[13] James Madison and Thomas Jefferson both listed the book as a suggested reading, with Jefferson commenting that *Wealth of Nations* was "the best book extant" on political economy.[14] David Lundberg and Henry May observe that from 1777 to 1790, Smith's economic treatise could be found in 28 percent of U.S. libraries, which exceeded the holdings of John Locke's *Treatises* and any of Jean Jacques Rousseau's works, except *Émile*.[15] Smith's work was so widely known in the United States that even those who had not read the book could speak of it in general terms.[16] Smithean thought permeated

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Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, and P. G. Stein, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), iii. 114.

[12] Thomas Jefferson to John Norvell, June 14, 1807, in Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, Merrill D. Peterson, ed. (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1176.

[13] Harlow Giles Unger, *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 72.

[14] Madison included *Wealth of Nations* in the curriculum at the College of William and Mary. See Richard F. Teichgraeber, "'Less abused than I had Reason to Expect': The Reception of *The Wealth of Nations* in Britain," *Historical Journal* 30 (1987): 334-44. On Jefferson's suggestions, see Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randoph, May 30, 1790 and Jefferson to John Garland Jefferson, June 11, 1790, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd et. al., eds., 28 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 16: 448-50, 480-82.

[15] Lundberg and May, "Enlightened Reader in America," statistical appendix.

[16] Fleischacker, "Adam Smith's Reception," 902-3.

learned society in the United States during the constitutional and early-national years, a time when people questioned how states would relate to a new, national government. In its efforts to balance the interests of the private with the public, Smith's work provided the politically active class of Americans with a way to negotiate the obstacles of early nationhood.

Smith's advocacy for both self-interest and self-lessness concerning political economy was part of his general appreciation of moderation. On matters of political economy, Smith was practical. He recognized that different motivations are justifiable depending on the situation. This moderation toward political economic matters helps explain his resonance in a country seeking to balance numerous state and national interests.

Smith's Impartial Spectator and Rhetorical Practice:

Judgment and Moderation

Smith's moderation not only permeated his writings on political economy, but it was also central to how Smith believed people ought to communicate about matters important to a legislator. For Smith, rhetorical practice, like political economy, necessitated a balance of self-interest and self-lessness. Understanding Smith's formulation of moderate rhetorical practice is achieved by looking at his treatment of judgment and rhetorical style.

Like the study of political economy, Smith's conceptualization of moral judgment was based on a reasoned consideration of self-interest and self-lessness. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith developed the concept of judgment through what he termed "the

impartial spectator." The central idea of the impartial spectator, as Smith wrote, held that "We examine it [our own conduct] as we imagine an impartial spectator would examine it" (III. 1. 2).[17] To adjudicate an action from the perspective of an impartial spectator requires the individual to imagine oneself in the situation of another agent. If within this imagined situation the individual feels the same feeling as the agent, then the individual sympathizes with the agent. Such sympathy is expressed with approval toward the agent and the action of the agent is deemed appropriate. If, from the imagined position as the impartial spectator, the same feeling is not felt, then the individual does not sympathize with the agent and the actions of the agent are deemed inappropriate (I. i. 3. 1). The impartial spectator is self-interested insomuch as the self is imagined in the position of another agent and, ultimately, it is the self who will render judgment after such imagining. Yet, by imagining the self in the position of another agent and considering the possibility of sympathy, self-lessness is also an essential component to the judgment of the impartial spectator. By considering the self and the other, Smith's impartial spectator produced a judgment based upon a reasoned consideration of interests.

In addition to the reasoned process that an impartial spectator undertakes to render judgment, Smith also accounted for emotion in moral judgment. The purpose of the impartial spectator was, according to Smith, "To approve of the passions of another" (I. i. 1. 10). His process for approving these passions would seem to sublimate emotion to the powers of reasoning. However, Smith saw a particular power in the judgment of the impartial spectator, a power that could cause the feelings of the spectator to surpass those

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[17] All references to Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* utilize the standardized citation format of Part, chapter, section, and paragraph. The reference text is Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, eds. *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

felt by an agent. To this point, Smith wrote, "We sometimes feel for another, a passion of which he himself seems to be altogether incapable; because, when we put ourselves in his case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not in his from the reality" (*TMS*, I. i. 1. 10). Although the judgment of the impartial spectator was reasonably constructed, that process did not exclude emotions from its final judgment. And, as Smith noted, the result of the impartial spectator could even generate more emotion than the emotion generated by the agent being judged. Although detachment, and thus a lack of emotion, seemed implicit in the concept of an impartial spectator, that was not the case for Smith. So long as the adjudicator took the proper steps to render judgment, there were no constraints to the level of emotion of the final judgment.

Although not overtly expressed as a rhetorical concept in Smith's work, the process of rendering judgment as an impartial spectator is deeply rhetorical. In one sense, the impartial spectator must be a rhetorical concept in those moments in which a person is asked to explain their judgment of another agent. In another sense, the actions required of the impartial spectator could be seen as a performance and, thus, would be dependent on various rhetorical moves to convey one's impartiality. David Marshall argues that for Smith's impartial spectator, the process of imagining the feelings of another agent was theatrical. The adjudicator was to imagine the feeling of sympathy toward another as though one was in front of a spectator.[18] Marshall's argument situates the impartial spectator in a social context and not in the mind. Thus, according to Marshall, the sympathy that the impartial spectator expresses plays an important role in social relations:

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[18] David Marshall, "Adam Smith and the Theatricality of Moral Sentiments," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1984): 596 (emphasis mine).

"it forces us to *moderate* our passions in order to create a 'harmony and concord with the emotions' of those who are watching us.'"[19]

Although developed under the auspices of moral philosophy, Smith's impartial spectator necessitated rhetoric at the levels of both reason-giving and performance. Even more, the judgment of the impartial spectator necessitated a particular type of rhetor. The rhetor demonstrating the judgment of the impartial spectator would be a master of certain types of strategies. Those strategies provided an ethos of moderate rhetoric. Thus, the judgment of the impartial spectator manifested potential to shape the strategic character of discourse. Smith's writings suggest that the performance of moderation was best achieved through the plain style. In particular, Smith's works offer three rhetorical characteristics of the plain style consistent with the moderate disposition of an impartial spectator: the appeal to common sense, a lack of ornamentation, and the explicit management of emotions.

Smith contextually defined common sense as principles, "which everyone assents to," that guide a person's understanding of criticism and morality (i. 133). [20] The idea that "everyone assents" to these principles made Smith's common sense more social (and

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[19] Marshall, "Adam Smith," 597.

[20] Most of Smith's thoughts on style were articulated in lectures on rhetoric given at Edinburgh and Glasgow variously between 1748 and 1763.The collection of Smith's writings on rhetoric, known as *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, has been assembled from a notebook of a student who listened to the lectures. The notebook was discovered by John M. Lothian in 1958, when Lothian purchased a number of books at a manor house in Aberdeenshire. There is no known version of the *Lectures* in Smith's own hand, likely due to his request in 1790 that his manuscripts be burned upon his death. Thus, the precision with which one can associate Smith with particular words and phrasings from his *Lectures* is questionable. All citations to *Lectures* will be parenthetical and refer to Adam Smith, *Lecture on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres Delievered in the University of Glasgow by Adam Smith Reported by a Student in 1762-63*, John M. Lothian, ed. (London: T. Nelson, 1963). Howell provides some corroboration of Smith's general perspectives by coordinating the *Lectures* with various mentions in contemporary writings of Smith's lectures on rhetoric. See Wilbur Samuel Howell, "The New Rhetoric Comes of Age: Adam Smith's Lectures at Edinburgh and Glasgow," in *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 537-46.

rhetorical) than psychological. Smith's common sense was not a faculty that only the intellectual elites could cultivate. Common sense was just that: common. Smith's melding of common sense and the plain style developed with his discussion of the "plain man." "A Plain man," Smith described, "is one who pays no regard to the common civilities and forms of good breeding . . . gives his opinion bluntly and affirms without condescending to give a reason for his doing so" (*LRBL*, i. 85-86; see also i. 87-88). In the plain man, "Compassion finds little[e] room in his breast" and "admiration does not at all suit his wisdom" (*LRBL*, i. 86). Smith's appreciation of common sense in the plain style emphasized the role of reason, particularly as a response to the unearned credibility that one might receive from social standing.

In addition to common sense, the plain style was also expressed by a lack of unnecessary ornamentation. In particular, Smith took umbrage with the accounts of tropes and figures of speech offered by standard-bearers Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Smith characterized the perspective of the ancients as overly ornate. Smith's sixth lecture built upon the premise that tropes and figures of speech "are what are generally conceived to give the chief beauty and elegance to language" (*LRBL*, i. v. 53). Cicero and Quintilian, Smith remarked, believed rhetorical figures ought to be introduced in speeches, as figures contained "all that is noble, grand, and sublime, all that is passionate, tender, and moving" (*LRBL*, i. v. 56). Smith did not see the intrinsic value of figures, stating,

> But the case is far otherwise. When the sentiment of the speaker is expressed in a neat, clear, plain, and clever manner, and the passion or affection he is poss[ess]ed of and intends, by sympathy, to communicate to his hearer, is plainly

> and cleverly hit off, then and then only the expression has all the force and beauty that language can give it. It matters not the least whether the figures of speech are introduced or not. (*LRBL*, i. v. 56)

In this passage, Smith connected the principles of the impartial spectator to rhetorical practice. He argued that tropes and figures were not a necessary condition for forceful or beautiful discourse. Smith held that beauty and force could also be found in "neat, clear, plain, and clever" expressions that were motivated by sympathy. Later, Smith reiterated his position on simplicity, claiming "the perfection of stile consists in the Express[ing] in the most concise, proper and precise manner the thought of the author, and that in the manner which best conveys the sentiment, passion or affection with which it affects or pretends it does affect him and which he designs to communicate to his reader" (*LRBL*, i. 133). Smith's ten lectures on communication reflected a belief "that the only acceptable modern style committed to communication is the plain."[21]

Smith's plain style was rooted in common sense and plainness, but that did not exclude the expression of emotion in discourse. By stripping away the requirement of excesses (i.e., tropes and schemes), Smith was not advocating unemotional reasoning. Rather, by conveying a message in the simplest manner, the rhetor was better able to express the passions that "affected the author" (*LRBL*, i. 136). If tropes and figures of speech were natural and germane to the subject matter, then, Smith argued, their usage was not excessive. In fact, Smith criticized the character of men who lacked the "strong passions" to be "carried away in the ordinary matter" (*LRBL*, i. 139). Passions were natural and, even more, varied in different situations.

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[21] Howell, "The New Rhetoric Comes of Age," 549.

Smith perceived the rhetorical theorists of his time as being too concerned with developing an ideal style. The ideal style privileged a particular affective quality in speech, regardless of situation or circumstance. Smith criticized those who created their own ideal style tailored to their own lack of natural abilities and passions. In one example, Smith aimed his criticism at Lord Shafstbury, noting that the latter's "weakly state of body . . . prevented the violence of his passions" and "did not incline him greatly to be of any particular temper to any great height." This was a negative trait in Smith's estimation, as Shaftsbury "was not led to have any particular Stile" and as a result, invented an ideal style that was not grounded in the times and circumstances (*LRBL*, i. 144). Smith's plain style regarded the natural and situated expression of emotions as a necessary condition for a rhetor to communicate a message to a person or audience.

Political economy derived its ethos from governing. Rhetors participating in political economic discourse were expected to represent the needs of the people. In a democracy like the United States, representing others, or "the people," was an inherent process in building the nation-state. The cogency of Smith's moderate rhetoric captures the essence of democratic governance. The democratic character of Smith's moderate rhetoric of political economy, thus, held the potential to negotiate divisive political issues such as slavery. At the level of judgment and rhetorical style, moderate rhetoric was grounded in understanding others and understanding what motivated others. Smith's conception of moderate rhetoric saw value in the instrumental and pathetic dimensions of rhetoric, so long as a rhetor demonstrated that such rhetoric was derived from sound judgment and conveyed through the appropriate style. Smith's moderate rhetoric had the

potential to generate broad identification with the audiences of security and morality discourses.

Supporters of colonization believed their project could bridge the divide between security and morality discourses. Even more, colonizationists were appealing to the legislative branch to support their efforts, seeing colonization as a project worthy of congressional support. The situation facing colonization supporters was not easy, as tensions were only growing more intense and intransigent. However, the moderate dimension of rhetoric expounded by Smith provided the speakers at the colonization meeting with the resources to bring together divergent interests and motivate a national colonization movement.

The Need for Moderate Rhetoric in Early Political Economic Discourse on Slavery: Debates on Representation and Taxation in the Articles of Confederation

Moderate rhetoric had tremendous potential to manage the various and intense discursive tensions concerning slavery. However, this potential was not immediately realized in U.S. political economic discourse. The debates concerning slavery and the Articles demonstrated the need for moderate rhetoric if the states were going to unite as one federal government. The relationship between the federal government and slavery in the Articles was hotly debated. The two questions that pervaded these debates concerned how representation to the Continental Congress would be apportioned and how taxes would be calculated.[22] These debates on representation and taxation in relation to the Articles of Confederation displayed the absence of moderate rhetoric in the loose national

[22] Donald L. Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 144. The Continental Congress was renamed the Congress of the Confederation upon ratification.

association created by the Articles. The lack of moderation contributed to a flawed governing document that would be revisited less than a decade after its ratification. In this section, then, the need for moderate rhetoric is illustrated by briefly considering how the discursive tensions of slavery continued in the debates on representation and taxation in the Articles.

The question of representation in the Articles was an early struggle over slave power in the United States. Delegates to the Second Continental Congress were not yet thinking of the colonies as the United States; rather most in attendance conceived of the gathering as an attempt to force the hand of the British government. As such, attendees were content with the previous schemes of representation (i.e., one vote per colony) established at the First Continental Congress. At the Second Continental Congress Benjamin Franklin proposed otherwise, suggesting a system of representation based upon population. Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush took Franklin's proposal a step further, suggesting that representation be decided based upon "free inhabitants."[23] Yet, Rush's suggestion proved only a minor obstacle to what Donald L. Robinson refers to as the "inertia" of previous representation schemes.[24] The lack of debate on Franklin's and Rush's representation schemes was not due to a lack of controversy; it was quite the opposite. To reconsider representation was to reconsider the status of slaves. If slaves were counted for representation, then they must be humans (and not chattel) and must be counted toward taxes (or freed). If slaves were not counted, then slave states would have a smaller population and thus, fewer representatives to Congress. In these debates, the

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[23] *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, Worthington C. Ford, et al., eds., (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), 6: 1105 (hereafter cited as *JCC*).

[24] Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics*, 145.

arguments to avoid change helped to set aside the confusing subject and avoid touching any nerves about the status of slavery. By maintaining the status quo, however, the division fostered by the security and morality discourses remained.

Unlike the topic of representation, the debates concerning taxation and slavery at the Second Continental Congress generated increased tensions. Although taxes would only be levied by the Confederation for a "common Treasury" to provide "common defense," the subject of how taxes would be apportioned was a contentious one. In Dickinson's draft, Article eleven suggested that taxation would be "in Proportion to the Number of Inhabitants of every Age, Sex, and Quality, except Indians not paying taxes, in each Colony."[25] The ensuing debate reflected the competing rhetorical approaches cultivated within security and morality discourses. Many Southerners used instrumental rhetorical strategies to argue against what they saw as the attempts by Northerners to equate whites and blacks. Samuel Chase, a member of the Maryland delegation, argued, "The negroes are wealth. . . [they are] a species of property, personal estate." As a consequence of this claim, then, Chase argued that all types of wealth would have to be taxed, including "Massachusetts fisheries."[26] The arguments of Chase and others aimed to suppress any discussion that connected slavery and humanity. As a "species of property," slaves were easier to rhetorically control.

The calmness sought by Southerners and their use of instrumental rhetoric was quickly challenged by Northerners. James Wilson of Pennsylvania argued that slaves should be taxed, because "Slaves prevent freemen from cultivating a country." Although Wilson's argument was racist in its own right, his claim invited more emotion into the

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[25] John Dickinson, "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union [draft]," (12 July 1776) in *JCC*, 5: 548.

[26] This account comes from Thomas Jefferson and was published in the *JCC*, 6: 1079-80.

debates on taxation and slavery than most Southerners would have liked. To wit, Thomas Lynch heatedly replied that if the debate was going to be about whether slaves ought to be considered property or not, then the proceedings should cease. Even more, Lynch proclaimed that if slaves were taxed because they could produce wealth, then so too should livestock be taxed. Benjamin Franklin stoked the pathetic fire started by Wilson, responding that the difference between slaves and livestock was that "sheep will never make any insurrections."[27] On the issue of taxation and the Articles, the lack of moderation was evident in the rhetorical sparring between instrumental and pathetic approaches to slavery. The divisiveness of such discursive tensions extended into the vote on Chase's amendment to only count white inhabitants. The vote divided on sectional lines, and Georgia split its vote in half. It was a tie vote and Chase's amendment failed.

The Articles of Confederation passed the Congress and were eventually ratified by the states despite the debates on representation, taxation, and slavery. However, these debates show that the rhetorical approaches that drove the security-morality tension would continue in U.S. political economic discourse unless an alternative rhetorical approach could overcome the tension. Additionally, the need for moderate rhetoric would intensify at the Federal Convention. The Articles created an affiliation of states, the Constitution would create the *United States*. As Howard H. Peckham argues, the Articles of Confederation did not add powers to the Continental Congress; it merely "described" the confederation of states.[28] Alexander Hamilton similarly intimated that the Articles of Confederation failed to create a government, writing in *The Federalist*, number 85, "A

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[27] *JCC*, 6: 1080.

[28] Howard H. Peckham, *The War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 84,

nation, without a national government, is . . . an awful spectacle."[29] However, when a stronger national government was created—as was the case with the Federal Convention and the Constitution—the desire to protect state interests would increase. To function as the United States and attempt to overcome the discursive tensions of slavery, an alternative rhetorical approach would be necessary.

Moderate Rhetoric at the Federal Convention:

The Creation of the Constitution

In an attempt to move beyond the flaws of the Articles, the Congress of the Confederation passed a resolution on February 21, 1787, calling for a "convention of delegates. . . appointed by the several states" to convene on the second Monday of May (the fourteenth) in Philadelphia.[30] The purpose of the Federal Convention was to "consider the state of the [A]merican Union."[31] In their deliberations at the Federal Convention, delegates were again faced with the issues of representation and taxation, and again, slavery was a key factor in how each state's delegates wanted to define representation and taxation in the United States. Yet, the debate at the Federal Convention was different than previous efforts. The failures of the Articles required

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[29] Alexander Hamilton, "The Federalist No. 85," (May 28, 1788), repr. in *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam Classic, 2002), 538.

[30] Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*. 4 vols. Rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937), III: I. Farrand's edition of the Federal Convention is drawn from the Journal (the convention's secretary's minutes), and the notes of various participants, chiefly James Madison. The limitation of this collection is that there is not an exact transcription of the record. The account of a particular speech might be tinted by the scribe's political perspective or copied in error. Yet, Farrand's edition is widely recognized as the authoritative collection on the Federal Convention. Furthermore, because the deliberations were held in secrecy, there were no additional accounts with which to triangulate the speech accounts. It should also be noted that the quotations from Farrand's text have not been altered, except when noted in brackets.

[31] Farrand, *Records*, I: 16.

delegates to the Federal Convention to consider alternatives. Little would change if the same instrumental and pathetic rhetorical approaches went unaddressed. As such, moderate rhetoric gained footing in the Federal Convention debates on slavery, specifically on the matters of the three-fifths rule and the power of the federal government over slavery.

The Three-Fifths Rule and Moderate Rhetoric at the Federal Convention, 1787: Representation, Taxation, and Slavery

Unlike the Second Continental Congress—where the issue of representation was sublimated—concerns about representation were made apparent early in the Convention proceedings. On May 29, Edmund Randolph offered fifteen resolutions concerning the new federal government. The second resolution stated, "[T]he rights of suffrage in the National Legislature ought to be proportioned to the Quotas of contribution or to the number of free inhabitants, as one or the other rule may seem best in different cases."[32] By early July, a new proposal set forth a scheme of representation. Generated by Massachusetts delegate Elbridge Gerry and his "grand committee," the proposal stated that representation in one branch would be based upon inhabitants (one member for every 40,000 inhabitants, minimum of one representative for each state), and in the second branch, "each state shall have an equal vote."[33] With representation (and, eventually, taxation) tied to state population, slavery become an inevitable source of debate.

In support of Gerry's proposal, James Madison appealed to common sense and made his judgment as an impartial spectator rhetorically evident. One source of conflict

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[32] Farrand, *Records*, I: 20.

[33] Farrand, *Records*, I: 523.

derived from concern for the provision that spending bills would originate from the "lower branch" (i.e., the House of Representatives). Smaller states worried that having fewer in numbers in the House would negatively impact their ability to introduce spending bills. Madison's reply found support in common sense reasoning: "If seven States in the upper branch wished a bill to be originated, they might surely find some member from some of the same States in the lower branch who would originate it."[34] Madison's reasoning was simple: if a bill was important, someone from the lower branch would see such significance just as much as a person in the upper branch. Madison went further to emphasize the "common" in common sense by exposing the false choice foisted upon delegates. Madison "conceived that the Convention was reduced to the alternative of either departing from justice in order to conciliate the smaller States, and the minority of the people of the U. S. or of displeasing these by justly gratifying the larger States and majority of the people." Madison intimated that if legislators worked from the principles of common sense, they would see that Gerry's bill provided a reasonable method of representation.

Madison also called upon legislators to manage their emotions in their deliberations. Madison argued, "The Convention ought to pursue a plan which would *bear the test of examination*, which would be espoused & supported by the *enlightened and impartial part of America*, & which they could themselves vindicate and urge."[35] Madison demonstrated the management of emotions himself as he considered the goals of the Convention: "Harmony in the Convention was not doubt much to be desired. Satisfaction to all the States, in the first instance still more so. But if the principal States

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[34] Farrand, *Records*, I: 527.

[35] Farrand, *Records*, I: 528 (emphasis added).

comprehending the majority of the people of the U. S. should concur in a *just & judicious* plan, he had the firmest hopes that all the other States would by degrees accede to it" [emphasis added].[36] Harmony and satisfaction were desirable outcomes, yet they were idealistic. Madison proposed justice and judiciousness as more practical criteria for the Convention. Throughout his support for the committee's representation report, Madison's moderate rhetoric crafted a middle ground, rooted in common sense and supported without high emotion.

There was disagreement on Gerry's proposal and Madison's argument; yet even in disagreement speakers employed moderate rhetoric in the debates. Specifically, rhetors used the concept of Union to balance emotion and reason in the service of a moderate approach to the subject of representation. Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania offered the first reply to Madison. Morris thought the "form and matter of the Report objectionable" because it seemed as though delegates were only representing their states and not trying to create a strong union.[37] Morris's use of Union provided him with a symbol that, in the moment, could appear both emotional and practical. Initially, Morris defined himself as a person concerned with unity, stating that he saw himself as "a Representative of America" and "to some degree as a Representative of the whole human race."[38] Such an expansive appeal was inflected with the heightened emotion.[39] The two sides must unite, argued Gerry, for, "If we do not come to some agreement among ourselves some foreign

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[36] Farrand, *Records*, I: 528-29.

[37] Farrand, *Records*, I: 529.

[38] Farrand, *Records*, I: 529.

[39] Farrand, *Records*, I: 530.

sword will probably do the work for us."[40] Although Morris and Gerry disagreed with Madison's perspective on representation, both could agree that a resolution was necessary to create a viable union. Delegates' use of moderate rhetoric helped to avoid the divisiveness fostered by security and morality discourses.

The mutual appreciation of moderate rhetoric fostered agreement on representation in the form of the three-fifths rule. Although both sides fought against the three-fifths ratio, it remained in the conversations. North Carolinian Hugh Williamson noted the middle-ground provided by the three-fifths ratio, which allowed him to associate with neither extreme.[41] The breakthrough argument that seemed to suffice for both sides of the representation question was best articulated by Wilson, who noted that "less umbrage would perhaps be taken agst. an admission of the slaves into the Rule of representation, if it should be so expressed as to make them indirectly only an ingredient in the rule, by saying that they should enter into the rule of taxation: and as representation was to be according to taxation, the end would be equally attained."[42] The debate on the three-fifths rule demonstrated the possibility for agreement that might emerge from moderate rhetoric. Reason was ever-present in the discourse, even when coupled with well-balanced emotional appeals. If political economy was the science of the legislator, as Smith posited, it would be fitting that moderation could be found in a mathematical ratio. There was little debate on the exact ratio, indicating that the presence of some middle ground (and not the correctness of the ratio) was the important characteristic to

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[40] Farrand, *Records*, I: 532.

[41] Farrand, *Records*, I: 581.

[42] Farrand, *Records*, I: 594.

delegates. The amendment passed, tying representation to taxation, with slaves counting as three-fifths of a person.

Moderate rhetoric carried the vote, but the limitations of moderation did not go unnoticed. After the ratio passed, Morris tried to characterize the ratio as a failed attempt to mute the sectional divide on slavery. He stated, "A distinction [slavery] had been set up & urged, between the Nn. & Southn. States . . . either this distinction is fictitious or real: if fictitious, let it be dismissed & let us proceed with due confidence. If it be real, instead of attempting to blend incompatible things, let us at once take a friendly leave of each other."[43] Morris's observation pointed to the efficacy of the three-fifths rule in addressing the tensions lurking beyond the walls of government. Although many delegates agreed to such a compromise, the compromise did not address whether or not moderate rhetoric could help to transcend the security-morality tension throughout the United States, or whether it only quelled deeper rhetorical energies that would eventually resurface. The answer to this question could not be discerned at the Federal Convention and would be confronted by colonizationists in 1816.

The Power of the Federal Government over Slavery:

Moderate Rhetoric and the Slave Trade at the Federal Convention

Like the debates on representation, the subject of slavery greatly impacted the debates on the powers of the federal government. After voting on the representation issue, a Committee of Detail was charged to address the subject of federal powers. On August 6, a Southern-dominated committee produced a thoroughly Southern report,

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[43] Farrand, *Records*, I: 604.

insulating slavery from governmental interference. The report offered an article to prohibit the federal government from taxing exports from states, taxing the importation of slaves, and passing "navigation acts" (any act dealing with foreign trade) without a two-thirds majority in each House.[44] As the debate on this report proceeded, more so than in the debates on representation and taxation, the practice of slavery in the Union seemed to hang in the balance. Tensions ran high, with many rhetors returning to rhetorical strategies from the security and morality discourses to contest how slavery and federal powers would relate in the Constitution.

Initially, the debate fostered division through the familiar instrumental and pathetic rhetorical strategies. Northern delegates thought the South was attempting to gain the advantages of slavery without paying for them, while Southern delegates took any measure regarding slavery as an affront to their way of life. Luther Martin, a delegate from Maryland, offered a bold critique of the report. He observed that because of the three-fifths rule, the South would be encouraged to import more slaves to gain power. Even beyond his appeal to a sense of union, Martin invoked the moral to declare the encouragement of the slave trade as "inconsistent with the principles of the revolution and dishonorable to the American character to have such a feature in the Constitution."[45] There were a few adherents to Martin's perspective, including George Mason, who referred to slavery as "this infernal traffic" and claimed that "Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant."[46] John Langdon of New Hampshire, "[could] not with a good

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[44] The printed copies of the Committee of detail report were misnumbered. Article VII was labeled as Article VI, repeating the numbering of the previous articles. I will use corrected numbering in referring to the Articles in this report. Farrand, *Records*, II: 183.

[45] Farrand, *Records*, II: 364.

[46] Farrand, *Records*, II: 370.

conscience leave it with the States who could then go on with the traffic."[47] Similarly, pro-slavery advocates were obstinately opposed to any bar to the slave trade in the Constitution. Staving off an infringement on the social order of slave states, Charles Pinckney was clear: "South Carolina can never receive the plan if it prohibits the slave trade."[48] Divisive arguments from both sides of the slavery issue fostered discursive tension within the Convention's deliberations. To produce a Constitution, some common ground would need to be secured.

But within this renewed tension, some voices called upon moderate rhetoric to narrow the focus of the debate and craft common ground. Responses to the pathetic rhetoric of anti-slavery argued that the occasion—distinctively political—should confine the topics to be discussed. John Rutledge of South Carolina focused the attention of delegates on political matters, arguing, "Religion & humanity had nothing to do with this question—Interest alone is the governing principles with Nations." Connecticut's Oliver Ellsworth concurred: "The morality or wisdom of slavery are considerations belonging to the States themselves."[49] New York's Rufus King believed "the subject should be considered in political light only."[50] These delegates actively sought to remove the debate from the contentious realm of security and morality. Labeling the subject as a "political" question invited delegates to discuss the issue using the appropriate rhetorical strategies for a political issue, namely moderate rhetoric.

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[47] Farrand, *Records*, II: 373.

[48] Farrand, *Records*, II: 364.

[49] Farrand, *Records*, II: 364.

[50] Farrand, *Records*, II: 373

As a question of principles and politics, the appeal to common sense encouraged an emphasis on shared principles. Ellsworth argued that from the principles of common sense, the Northern states should "not oppose the increase of Slaves which will increase the commodities of which they will become carriers."[51] Ellsworth added, "What enriches a part enriches the whole."[52] Gerry urged that the Convention "ought to be careful not to give any sanction to slavery," but he saw that the Convention could not control the conduct of the states concerning slavery.[53] Ellsworth captured the necessity of moderate rhetoric on political economic matters, lamenting, "If we do not agree on this *middle & moderate ground*, [I am] afraid we should lose two States."[54] Framing the debate on federal power and slavery through moderate rhetoric—while sublimating security and morality concerns—offered delegates the most politically expedient option to create a compromise.

Ending the slave trade, once a topic that would have been met with acid-tongued opposition from the South, profited from the moderate rhetoric that had calmed the debate on federal powers. A report from the "Committee of Eleven" had offered 1800 as the first year that the federal government could limit the importation of slaves. General Pinckney of South Carolina quickly moved to amend this provision to 1808. It was seconded and passed. Much like the debate on the three-fifths rule, moderate rhetoric provided an appropriate manner in which to discuss the practical details of limiting the slave trade.

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[51] Farrand, *Records*, II: 364.

[52] Farrand, *Records*, II: 364.

[53] Farrand, *Records*, II: 372.

[54] Farrand, *Records*, II: 375 (emphasis mine).

The spirit of moderation led not only to a deferred date at which time slave importation could be limited, but it also led to the linguistic exclusion of "slavery" in the Constitution. On August 25, the Convention debated a clause concerning "The importation of slaves," yet agreed to the more euphemistically worded clause on "The migration or importation of such persons as the several States now existing shall think proper to admit. . . ."[55] The change helped to avoid debating the propriety of slavery and invoking the intense emotions that threatened compromise. Additionally, Northerners and Southerners could claim victory in the outcome. Removing explicit reference to "slaves" or "slavery" accommodated Southern delegates who firmly believed that any mention of slavery went too far in interfering with the rights of the states. Yet, the allusions to slavery still afforded many Northern delegates the comfort that within the governmental structure established by the document, slavery had the potential to be limited.

At the close of the Federal Convention, Franklin and George Washington framed past and future deliberations on the Constitution in moderate rhetorical terms. Franklin, the elder statesman of the proceedings, recognized that the Constitution was practical in his view of the Constitution, stating that it provided "a general Government necessary for us."[56] He also considered the argument that another convention could create a better document, responding, "I doubt too whether any other Convention we can obtain may be able to make a better Constitution."[57] Franklin also warned that the use of divisive

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[55] Farrand, *Records*, II: 416.

[56] Farrand, *Records*, II: 642.

[57] Farrand, *Records*, II: 642.

rhetoric in the ratification process would invite foreign nations to look down upon the United States.[58]

Like Franklin, Washington provided an interpretation of the Convention proceedings and the Constitution that emphasized the practical considerations involved. In a letter to the president of the Confederation Congress, Washington connected the behavior of the Convention to notions of compromise and union.[59] Washington's letter openly recognized a key problem in unification of the states: "It is obviously impracticable in the federal government of these States, to secure all rights of independent sovereignty to each, and yet provide the safety of all." Such a problem could not be resolved by drawing "with precision the line between those rights which may be surrendered, and those which may be reserved"; instead, the level of sacrifice would be based upon "situation and circumstance."[60] Washington's letter presumed the practical judgment of the impartial spectator, assuring its reader, "In all our deliberations on this subject we kept steadily in our view, that which appears to us the greatest interest of every true America, the consolidation of our Union, in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety, perhaps our national existence."[61] Through "a spirit of amity and . . . of mutual deference" the Convention had arrived at a governing document for the Union.[62]

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[58] Farrand, *Records*, II: 643.

[59] Farrand, *Records*, II: 666-67. The letter was actually written by Gouverneur Morris. See also, Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1913); and Peter B. Knupfer, "The Rhetoric of Conciliation: American Civic Culture and the Federalist Defense of Compromise," *Journal of the Early Republic* 11 (1991): 321.

[60] Farrand, *Records*, II: 666.

[61] Farrand, *Records*, II: 667.

[62] Farrand, *Records*, II: 667.

The moderate rhetorical character of the proceedings, which, according to Peter B. Knupfer, "sought the development of concurring majorities over time while also attempting to defuse extremist, emotional, and dogmatic criticisms of the Constitution," proved successful to gaining ratification.[63] Still, the Constitution only provided the ground rules for U.S. governance. Moving forward, the question would be to what extent the moderate rhetoric from the Convention and Constitution would impact the rough-and-tumble deliberations of future debates on slavery.

Moderate Rhetoric in Full Voice:
Debating the End of the International Slave Trade

The ratification of the Constitution created a symbolic and legal authority for discourse concerning slavery. Still, the security-morality tension persisted in the discourse of slavery and quickly permeated the congressional chamber. The examples of the Federal Convention and the ratified Constitution provided one of the few "ready means" to advance the sentiment of union.[64] The ongoing divisions between states help explain, in part, why such means were limited. However, unlike previous legislative debates about slavery, legislators turned to the Constitution as a new, uniquely American, symbol of moderation. The moderation of the Constitution was challenged almost immediately by an anti-slavery petition by the Quaker Yearly Meeting of Pennsylvania in 1790. The Constitution also invited debate about slavery by setting 1808 as the earliest year that the international slave trade could be ended. In those two debates, the security-morality tension challenged the moderate rhetoric of political economy. However, armed

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[63] Knupfer, "Rhetoric of Conciliation," 317.

[64] Rogan Kersh, *Dreams of a More Perfect Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 60.

with the symbolic resources of the Constitution, moderate rhetoric helped maintain the union despite the divisiveness of slavery.

Testing the Constitutional Union: Moderate Rhetoric and the Challenge of the Security-Morality Tension in the First Congress

The tenuous compromise that moderate rhetoric helped to create was immediately tested within the First Congress of the United States of America. On February 11, 1790, Pennsylvania Representative Thomas Fitzsimons brought a petition before the Senate and House of Representatives. Drafted by the Quaker Yearly Meeting of 1789, the petition challenged the moderate rhetoric of political economy with renewed pathos. The petition stated that the Quakers, "Firmly believ[ed] that unfeigned righteousness in public as well as private stations, is the only sure ground for hope for Divine blessing." Furthermore, anything short of "the ennobling principle of universal good-will to men" would be "fallacious and illusive."[65] The Quakers audaciously opined that the Congress should "exert upright endeavors, to the full extent of your power [and] to remove every obstruction to public righteousness," which "must produce the abolition of the slave trade."[66] The next day Benjamin Franklin's support was added to the Quaker's cause. A memorial was read from the "Pennsylvania Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and the improvement of the condition of the African race," signed by Franklin, the Society president.[67] The

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[65] *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 11, 1790, 1223. (Hereafter cited as *Annals*). The petition was signed by the Yearly Meetings of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the western parts of Maryland and Virginia. Another petition was also presented by the New York Society of Friends.

[66] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 11, 1790, 1225.

[67] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 11, 1790, 1239-40.

Quaker petition from the previous day was also read. Both the petition and Franklin's support pushed the pathetic dimension of rhetoric into the legislative arena, and made bold claims against the practice of slavery.

The combination of the petition and memorial excited the passions of many Southern delegates. Their rhetorical response represented a reversion to the instrumentalism of security discourse. Thomas Tucker of South Carolina "feared the commitment of it [the petition] would be a very alarming circumstance to the Southern States," going on to characterize the petition as a "mischievous attempt" by Northerners to raise false hopes within the slave population.[68] The debate that ensued made many Southerners uncomfortable, with William L. Smith of South Carolina threatening to "[call] the yeas and nays, if gentlemen persisted in pressing the question."[69] In a prophetic statement, Tucker rebuked the prospect of slave emancipation by arguing, "This would never be submitted to by the Southern States without a civil war."[70] Joshua Seney of Maryland and Aedanus Burke of South Carolina both referred to the petition as unconstitutional.[71] The security-morality tension that had been negotiated during the Federal Convention was now being threatened by its potential divisiveness during the republic's first legislative session as the United States.

The response to this resurgence of the security-morality tension was a more fully developed deployment of moderate rhetoric. With the experience of the Federal Convention debate and the unifying symbol of the Constitution to aid their efforts, rhetors

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[68] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 12, 1790, 1240.

[69] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 11, 1790, 1233.

[70] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 12, 1790, 1240.

[71] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 12, 1790, 1241.

used multiple dimensions of moderate rhetoric to quell the tensions arising from the Quaker anti-slavery petition. The fullness of the moderate rhetoric was expressed in three responses in congressional debates on the anti-slavery petition, most notably in the speech made by William L. Smith from South Carolina. One response focused on the process required to consider the anti-slavery petition. Another response emphasized the importance of propriety in the deliberations. Lastly, a variety of arguments were made about the practicality of the petition.

Many rhetors emphasized the process needed to consider the petition, a move which harkened back to Adam Smith's conceptualization of the impartial spectator. Immediate debate on the petition was out of the question, for it was "contrary to our [Congress's] usual mode of procedure."[72] This response, offered by Smith of South Carolina, used the legislative process as a way to quell the intense emotions that might arise if the debate were allowed to occur immediately. Thus, in the debate that ensued on February 11, the focus was not on the abolition of the slave trade, but on how the House would proceed. It had been moved and seconded that the petition should be referred to committee. Explicit appeals to moderation helped to define the process, as illustrated in the comments of Georgian Abraham Baldwin, who "hoped the business would be conducted with temper and moderation, and that gentlemen would concede and pass the subject over for a day at least." Adhering to process and procedure meant that the petition would be sent to committee. As James Madison noted, sending the petition to committee would be "the usual way" and would consider the petition as "a matter of course."[73] The House agreed with Madison and voted to send the petition to committee as they had done

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[72] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 11, 1790, 1225.

[73] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., February 12, 1790, 1246.

previously. Through the norms of process, a reasonable judgment could be rendered and the discursive tensions could be temporarily assuaged.

When the debate moved to the Committee of the Whole (meaning the entire House), the propriety of the petition was considered. Smith of South Carolina offered the most lengthy and substantive response to the anti-slavery memorials for the pro-slavery cause. His speech on March 17 refrained from lambasting the Quakers, Franklin, or anti-slavery representatives from the North. Instead, Smith "lamented much of the subject" of the memorials, as he believed it would lead to a "very unpleasant discussion" and "excite the alarms of the Southern members."[74] Smith inferred that he would not even be discussing the memorials, but for the Committee of the Whole voting to do so. As a member of the House, then, it was properly his duty to offer some comments on the memorials. Throughout his speech Smith returned to the impropriety of the petitions being considered in the House, referring to the "improper language" of the memorialists, the abdication of "the common rules of proceeding" to even consider the memorials, and the need for "[a] proper consideration" of emancipation (in contrast to the improper consideration offered by the petitioners).[75] The concept of propriety afforded Smith the ability to balance the reasonability of not discussing the petition with the potential emotions attached to discussions of slavery. Both could be implicated without violating the propriety of the legislative process.

Some rhetors that were more sympathetic to the anti-slavery cause who, like the pro-slavery Smith, held propriety as a necessity for any legislative action on slavery. On March 22, Elias Boudinot of New Jersey agreed with many of Smith's points, but also

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[74] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1503.

[75] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1503, 1508.

offered alternative moderate interpretation of the anti-slavery memorials. Boudinot quoted the ringing endorsement for equality in the Declaration—"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—but he saw the Constitution as the "instrument" that Congress must uphold. Boudinot cited the Declaration, a rhetorical resource within morality discourse. Yet, such usage was moderated by the process set forth in the Constitution. The respect for the Constitution and propriety allowed Smith and Boudinot to agree on the Quaker anti-slavery petition, despite different perspectives on slavery.

Within political economic discourse, the business of governing rendered practicality a stock issue. As such, Smith considered the "impracticability" of extending freedom to all.[76] Smith's arguments about the practicality of emancipation employed multiple arguments to support his claim that the substance of the memorials was erroneous. Smith's arguments were three. Smith's first argument departed from his previous use of moderate rhetoric, as he argued that emancipation was impractical because free blacks would wreak havoc upon the ruling class whites. As part of this line of argument, Smith drew attention to worries about the mixing of white and black bloodlines and even read from Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* as support for claims of black inferiority.[77] Smith's pathos was tempered by the appeal to common sense, as he offered the following observation: "It was well known that they [black slaves] were an indolent people, improvident, averse to labor; when emancipated,

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[76] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1509.

[77] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1505, 1507, 1509.

they would either starve or plunder."[78] Smith's argument would seem common to a particular audience of Southern whites, but such an argument, rooted in a commonplace within security discourse, would likely be rejected by other audiences (e.g., anti-slavery whites in the North) in favor of claims to natural rights.

Although Smith's argument about white security and practicability was not cast in a moderate fashion, Boudinot agreed with Smith and provided a moral justification. Boudinot stated, "It would be inhumanity itself to turn these unhappy people loose to murder each other, or to perish for the want of the necessaries of life."[79] If the entirety of the debate on the Quaker petition had focused on this issue, it seems likely that agreement would not have been achieved. However, this argument was tempered by its position in the overall debate—it came in the middle of Smith's speech and played a minor role in Boudinot's.

The thrust of the argument was also limited. Boudinot's argument illustrated a rare instance where moderate rhetoric functioned to mix warrants and claims from both discourses, rather than to build an entire argument acceptable to both sides. In Boudinot's case, the claim was that slaves should not be set free. Such a claim was self-evident within security discourse but contestable in morality discourse. However, the warrant for this claim expressed concern for the physical well-being of the enslaved. The well-being of the enslaved was not often expressed within security discourse, but was a significant concern within morality discourses. The result of using similar warrants to support opposing claims could, potentially, create identification with rhetors from security and morality discourses. Just as easily, the mixing of security and morality appeals within the

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[78] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1505.

[79] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1520.

structure of an argument provided a point of contention for the opposing discourses. Insomuch as moderate rhetoric attempted to overcome conflict, this dimension of moderation was not often used in speeches about slavery.

Practicability was also connected to the unique role of slaves in the economic system of the South. Framed in economic terms, the use of moderate rhetoric was a fitting rhetorical strategy. Smith offered his analysis by first, asking a question: "[W]ill the abolition of slavery strengthen South Carolina?" His answer addressed the crop-based economy of the South. Smith stated, "It [South Carolina] can only be cultivated by slaves; the climate, the nature of the soil, ancient habits, forbid the whites from performing the labor."[80] Smith analyzed the connection between the South Carolina economy and the rest of the country, eventually concluding, "If you injure the Southern States, the injury would reach our Northern and Eastern brethren; for the States are links of one chain: if we break one, the whole must fall to pieces."[81] If slaves were emancipated, as the petition suggested, then the entire Union would be economically impacted in a negative fashion. Smith offered a practical version in his appeal to union, rooted in potential financial loss.

The practicability of emancipation was also argued through appeals to tradition. For instance, Smith discussed the increased vagrancy in Britain after slaves were emancipated.[82] Smith also pointed to France and the premium put upon imported blacks in that country. He asked, "Is that nation more debased than others? Are they not a polished people, sensible of the rights of mankind, and actuated by the proper sentiments

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[80] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1510.

[81] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1510.

[82] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1509.

of humanity?"[83] Smith added another contemporary example (Spain), as well as the historical examples of the Greeks and Romans to illustrate that slaveholding did not debase the mind of the owner.[84] Through such examples, Smith demonstrated not only that slavery was practical, but that it did not impact the judgment of slaveholders, allowing him to demonstrate the sound judgment expected of a representative in Congress.

In 1790, appealing to the Constitution and to process allowed competing interests in Congress to find some agreement on the issue of slavery. The agreement in no way settled the problems of slavery; but it represented the potential thrust of moderate rhetoric while it also delayed more substantial debates until 1808. Moderate rhetoric was also used to find solutions to the problems of slavery beyond the halls of Congress. Written on March 6, 1790, and published in December of that year, Virginia landowner Ferdinand Fairfax opined that the way to alleviate the tensions of slavery was to gradually emancipate and colonize free blacks. Fairfax's article used many of the moderate rhetorical appeals previously employed by Smith and Boudinot, but took the step to make African colonization the logical, policy outcome of moderate rhetoric. Fairfax asserted that emancipation "must be gradual" in order to do justice to the slaves as well as to the slave owners (the latter being too substantially harmed by the significant loss of property in immediate emancipation).[85] Fairfax contended that the tension between North and South on the issue of slavery "suggests the *propriety*" of colonization.[86] Throughout the

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[83] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1512.

[84] *Annals*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., March 17, 1790, 1511-12.

[85] Ferdinando Fairfax, "Plan for Liberating the Negroes within the United States," *The American Museum*, December 1790, 285.

essay Fairfax demonstrated how colonization was in the best interests of both black and white. Such balancing was crucial to his moderate appeal. Although Fairfax's article is one of the earliest suggestions of a national plan to colonize blacks to Africa, it did not ignite a national colonization movement. Perhaps many were content with delaying the question of the slave trade until 1808. Legislators could more easily endorse the deferral suggested in the Constitution than engage in a debate to create a new scheme of such grand proportions. Still, Fairfax's essay demonstrates the potential congruence of moderate rhetoric and African colonization. Such a connection would not be realized in political economic discourse until the issue of the slave trade could re-emerge in 1808.

Fulfilling the Moderate Promise:

The End of the International Slave Trade

The Constitution would not allow the slave trade to be restricted until 1808. This delay provided a Constitutional argument on which both pro- and anti-slavery advocates could find agreement. Yet, the designation of a specific date meant that when that date arrived, the question would most certainly be raised. Consideration of ending the slave trade began well before 1808, with the annual message of President Jefferson, dated December 2, 1806. In that message, Jefferson wrote:

> I congratulate you, fellow-citizens, on the approach of the period which you may interpose your authority, constitutionally, to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of our country have long been eager

[86] Fairfax, "Plan," 286 (emphasis mine).

> to proscribe. Although no law you may pass can take prohibiting effect till the first day of the year one thousand eight hundred and eight, yet the intervening period is not too long to prevent, by timely notice, expeditions which cannot be completed before that day.

Jefferson's annual message recognized the constitutionally-influenced exigency, as it urged Congress to "interpose your authority, constitutionally" to consider the end of the slave trade. The Constitution initiated the debate, but that did not preclude the proceedings from inciting discursive wrangling for power. Southern states had long been uneasy with any mention of slavery in Congress, a sentiment evident in the exclusion of the term slavery or slaves from the Constitution. When Congress did debate the abolition of one aspect of slavery (i.e., the slave trade), the debate grew more contentious. Moderate rhetoric helped to create agreement on the Slave Trade Act, but such agreement became harder to achieve due to the increasing influence of instrumental and pathetic rhetorical strategies.

In the remarks of the chair of the House Committee on the Slave Trade, Representative Peter Early of Georgia illustrated the layering of emotion that impartial judgment could warrant. Early asked his fellow representatives, "Do not gentleman from every quarter of the Union prove, on the discussion of every question that has ever arisen in the House, having the most remote bearing on the giving freedom to the Africans in the bosom of our country, that it has excited the deepest sensibility in the breasts of those where slavery exists? And why is this so?" Early answered his own question, continuing, "It is, because those who, from experience, know the extent of the evil, believe that the most formidable aspect in which it can present itself, is by making these people free

among them." The emotion was justified by the common sense of the claim. Or, as Early stated, "[P]roof is useless; no fact can be more notorious."

Early did not slip fully into a defense of slavery, reverting back to the more calm character that an impartial spectator ought to demonstrate. Early asked his audience to "reflect and say whether such a law, opposed to the ideas, the passions, the views, and the affections of the people of the Southern States, can be executed." Early's appeal was that such reflection would lead to an appropriate judgment. By asking for reflection, Early distanced himself from the "passions" of the subject. Such an appeal created a veneer for Early's security concerns and emotional appeals. Regarding the efficacy of the slave trade bill, Early surmised that if the slave trade act required that forfeited slaves were to become free persons, then no Southerner would inform the federal government of illegal slave traders. To do so, Early claimed, would be to "turn loose, in the bosom of our country, firebrands that would consume them."[87] Early concluded his speech by apologizing for his views expressed in "plain language," but asked the audience to consider the lives of the white population as well as the lives of the slaves.[88] For Early, a Southerner, the rather predictable result of careful reflection was a return to the commonplace argument about white security.

The pressures of the security-morality tension were laid bare in Early's use of moderate rhetoric concerning the slave trade. His speech asked the audience to be reflective and to consider the Union when deliberating. Nonetheless, such moderation included a layer of traditional arguments about the rejection of federal intervention and fear of slave rebellion. His appeals to experience, reflection, and efficacy, constructed the

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[87] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 17, 1806, 174.

[88] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 17, 1806, 175.

speaker as a man interested in rendering sound judgment; but that judgment that was skewed to the interests of slaveholders and the concerns expressed within security discourse.

The anti-slavery response to Early's judgment magnified the security-morality tension in the moderate rhetoric of political economy. Representative Barnabus Bidwell of Massachusetts challenged Early's assumption that slaves were property, arguing, "They are not, by any law, human or divine, the slaves of any master."[89] Bidwell offered an amendment that would eliminate forfeiture from the slave trade bill and made free the slaves who were illegally transported to the United States. The anti-slavery sentiment of Bidwell and other Northerners exhibited features of the morality discourse, exacerbating tensions in Congress.

Yet, moderate rhetoric continued to provide members with the resources to avoid division on the question of slavery. Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts reasserted the primacy of moderate rhetoric into the debate by emphasizing agreement, balance, and practicality in his attempt to move the slave trade bill toward passage. Quincy opened his speech by noting that both sides agreed upon the end (that the international slave trade should be abolished), wishing "it were possible we could unite more perfectly as to the means."[90] The titling of illegally imported Africans as slaves was, according to Quincy, the primary objection of Bidwell and other opponents of forfeiture. Opponents had argued that forfeiture implied that slave importers had a right to own the slaves, a right that was not theirs according to the laws of nature.[91] Quincy agreed and stated that all in

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[89] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 29, 1806, 201.

[90] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 29, 1806, 221.

the House agreed to this principle, but noted that in reality, slaves would still be sold by "African Princes." The principles against slavery were "unquestionable," but, "To all practical purposes," slavery would continue in Africa and the United States. By noting the practical impossibility of abolishing slavery in the United States, Quincy stated, "Now this is that real, practical state of things to which I invite gentlemen to look, and on which they ought to legislate."[92] Quincy recognized and appreciated Bidwell's argument, but concluded that in the legislative forum, practicality and not principles needed to take precedence.

Having diverted from the subject of slavery and morality, Quincy reframed the question in political economic terms. He asked the House, "[H]ow ought we to reason? What is our duty?" Quincy's answer was two-fold. First, and quite simply, "Do all you can to prohibit." Second, if importation of slaves occurred, "place yourselves in such a situation as may enable you best to meliorate the condition of this unhappy class of men, consistent with self-preservation, and with the deep stake which an important section of the country has in the policy in which you adopt." Quincy's response reflected an appreciation of principles and circumstances. He advocated helping slaves as best one could, but not so much as to disrupt national unity. Quincy advised, "Reason and legislate according to the actual state of this description of persons. Place yourselves so as to do the best possible for their good." Quincy's speech reformulated forfeiture in moderate terms. Quincy sought the least offensive manner of interpretation; even arguing explicitly that the term forfeiture was "the appropriate commercial term—perhaps the only term we can use effectual to this purpose, and which does not interfere with the rights of the

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[91] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 29, 1806, 222-23.

[92] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 29, 1806, 222.

States."[93] Quincy's speech employed a host of arguments and appeals illustrative of moderate rhetoric. In doing so, Quincy aided in reframing the debate as a legislative (that is, political economic) matter and thus, separate from the realm of morality.

The passage of the Slave Trade Act was not simple by any means. The Slave Trade Act passed both the House and Senate in late February of 1807. The bill became law with President Jefferson's signature on March 3. Despite the bill's passage, the security-morality tension heightened anxieties among legislators. Unlike the prevalence of the security-morality tension before the act, this moment was shaped by the influence of the security-morality tension on moderate rhetoric. Rhetors like Quincy employed moderate rhetoric to return the debate to the isolation of political economic discourses, but the energy of the security-morality tension could not be matched by moderate rhetoric.

The slave trade debates did not lead to the end of slavery, but these debates did help solidify moderate rhetoric as a way to avoid the security-morality tension in slavery discourse. Nearly a decade after the Slave Trade Act was passed, colonization would be offered as a practical solution amenable to pro- and anti-slavery advocates alike. The development of moderate rhetoric within the realm of political economic discourse provided a plausible rhetorical resource for colonizationists whose scheme was crafted as a solution to the tensions manifested by the practice of slavery in the United States. The fit between colonization and moderate rhetoric was even foreshadowed in the Slave Trade debates. Many members posited the return to Africa of forfeited slaves. One such proponent, John Smilie of Pennsylvania, stated he had "no objection to be at the expense of sending them back to their own country, if this shall be deemed proper, or to pursuing

[93] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 29, 1806, 223.

any other mode which may be deemed advisable."[94] At the time, little came of this suggestion. Yet, as the United States grew and established its belongingness amongst powerful nations, the possibility of the United States extending beyond its shores also increased.

The Spread of Moderate Rhetoric:
The Rise of Benevolence and Colonization

The use of moderate rhetoric in Congress helped to create and maintain the union; however, that union was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain due to the pressures exerted by security and morality discourses. Although moderate rhetoric was best suited for the legislative sphere, the motivational thrust of such rhetoric was incorporated into other, non-congressional forums. One indication of the spread of moderate rhetoric can be seen in the concordance of political economy and the increase in benevolent societies in the early 1800s. Another indication of the spread of moderate rhetoric was the attempt to address slavery through political economic means that originated outside of Congress, specifically efforts at African colonization. The grounding of moderation in U.S. legislative history and the expansion of moderate rhetoric in the immediate context of the colonization meeting provided colonizationists with a rhetorical approach to that was symbolically flexible, yet powerful.

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[94] *Annals*, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., December 17, 1806, 170.

Taking Moderate Rhetoric beyond Congress:

The Concordance of Moderate Rhetoric and Benevolence

Rhetorically, benevolence connoted how one person was to act toward another. There was an implicit power dynamic in benevolence, as the "haves" were to act benevolently and help the "have-nots." In the usage of the time, one would not read of a slave acting benevolently toward a master, as such an expression would subvert the implied power dynamic of benevolence. Used together, natural rights and benevolence suggested that because everyone possesses natural rights, all efforts should be taken to assure those rights. However, benevolence alone could provide a conciliatory gesture toward natural rights. A white slaveholder could act benevolently toward a slave, which could be defined as providing shelter and food for the slaves (and maybe religion) while the slaves remained in bondage. Although natural rights dominated morality discourse during the Revolution, the existence of a more reserved moral appeal provided whites with a language to appear moral while attempting to restore the social order.[95]

The rhetorical conditions of the post-Revolutionary United States fostered the rhetoric of benevolence. During that time Americans coalesced and organized for the common social good.[96] This was nowhere more evident than in the proliferation of national societies in the newly-forming United States. Anti-slavery organizations in particular emerged during and after the Revolution, with the creation of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery for the Relief of Free Negroes Held in Bondage and for Improving the Condition of the African Race (1784) and the Society for

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[95] Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 177.

[96] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957), 240.

Promoting the Manumission of Slaves in New York City (1785).[97] Religious denominations moved beyond organized groups focused on specific moral improvements, such as the American Education Society, American Home Missionary Society, American Bible Society, American Tract Society, and the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance. As organizations, benevolent societies were modeled similar to a legislative body like Congress. They possessed leadership, members, constitutions, and goals. In this sense, appeals to benevolence developed within a unique political economic context.

Beyond the halls of Congress, the appeals to benevolence could serve similar aims as moderate rhetoric. John R. Bodo argues that benevolent societies used two strategies, both of which demonstrated a significant connection to political economic discourse. One strategy was that benevolent societies created friendly rivalries with their British counterparts. Through a second strategy, many societies desired to rise from sectional to national representation and influence.[98] Benevolence appealed to different motivations because of its generally positive meaning. The rise of benevolence in the early nineteenth century demonstrates the prominence of political economic principles within groups that seemed to align with the motivations of the morality discourse.

U.S. Internationalism, Political Economy,

and an Early Attempt at African Colonization

The exuberance of Americans after the War was turned inward, and manifested in attempts to address domestic problems with a new sense of power. The post-war

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[97] The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage had been created in 1775, yet its efforts were stalled by the Revolutionary War. Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 216.

[98] John R. Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 18.

environment also reminded Americans that slavery was still a pressing issue, as attempted slave insurrections had increased. These forces converged in the colonization efforts of Paul Cuffe, a sea captain born of an American Indian mother and an African father. In Cuffe's early effort, one can see the potential for colonization to connect to political economic discourse, the presence of moderate rhetoric in that scheme, as well as the scheme's potential to resolve the ever-present problem of slavery in the United States.

Cuffe discussed colonization in distinctively moderate terms. Through his friend James Pemberton, Cuffe became aware of the British group, the African Institution, and their work to establish a colony of free blacks in Sierra Leone. Pemberton's letter to Cuffe in September of 1808 reflected the growing importance of political economy in the slavery issue. Pemberton wrote,

> I perceive they are earnestly attentive to pursue the laudable object of promoting the civilization of the Blacks in their own country with a view to draw them off from the wild habits of like to which they have been accustomed, by instructing them in the arts of agricultures, mechanic labor, and domestic industry, by which means they hope to be instrumental in preparing the minds of those uninstructed people gradually to become qualified to receive religious instruction.[99]

In 1810, Cuffe set sail for Sierra Leone and the colony supported by the African Institution. The experience proved positive for Cuffe, who wrote in 1814, "The most advantageous means of encouragement to be rendered towards civilization of Africa is that the popularity of the colony be encouraged. . . families of good character should be encouraged to remove from the United States and settle at Sierra Leone in order to

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[99] James Pemberton to Paul Cuffe, September, 1808, quoted in Henry Noble Sherwood, "Paul Cuffe: The Redemption of Africa," *Journal of Negro History* 8 (1923): 169.

become farmers; and to lend them aid in such useful utilities as they are capable of; and in order for this accommodation it appears to me there should be an intercourse kept between America and Sierra Leone."[100] Cuffe became a spokesperson for African colonization and during the blockade of trade with Britain during the War of 1812, Cuffe asked Congress for permission to continue sailing to Sierra Leone.[101] Cuffe's frustration was indicative of the significance of political economic discourse to colonization: "Nothing: Nothing of much amount can be affected by an individual or private bodies until the government removes the obstruction in the way."[102] The obstruction for Cuffe was the blockade during the war. However, Cuffe's statement applied to the subject of slavery more generally. The philanthropy of individuals and groups could not change the significant problems of slavery. The strength of the federal government was needed. It was in this light that African colonizationists organized a national movement in 1816.

Conclusion

The moderate dimension of rhetoric highlighted the demonstration of reason and process in slavery discourse. Smith's rhetorical theory articulated the centrality of moderation in rhetorical practice, which U.S. legislators developed in deliberative proceedings. Moderate rhetoric was absent in the debates on the Articles of Confederation, leading to a deeply flawed association of states. The use of moderate rhetoric in the Federal Convention helped to create a union out of many, where the Articles had failed. Moderate rhetoric helped maintain the Union, but the challenges from

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[100] Paul Cuffe as quoted in Sherwood, "Paul Cuffe," 194.

[101] *Annals*, 13th Cong., 2nd sess., 1195, 1265.

[102] Paul Cuffe to T. Brine, January 16, 1817, quoted in Sherwood, "Paul Cuffe," 202.

security and morality discourses in later congressional debates suggested that moderation might not be enough to overcome the anxiety of slavery.

Importantly, the preceding analysis demonstrates that the moderate dimension of rhetoric was dynamic and fragile. Moderation was not simply a status of middle-ness or calm temperament. To be an effective response to the discursive tensions of the time, moderate rhetorical strategies needed to address the terms of the conflict in order to overcome the tension. As Smith argued, simply claiming moderation was not enough. Rhetors needed to demonstrate their role as an impartial spectator. Such demonstration required deft rhetorical sensibilities and a great deal of work on the part of the rhetor. If done well, the response was dynamic. However, because of the amount of work that could go into demonstrating moderation, this dimension of rhetoric was fragile. Missing links in one's reasoning could turn an attempt at moderation into a thinly veiled effort at instrumental or pathetic rhetoric. Thus, the moderate dimension of rhetoric had tremendous potential, but required a rhetor to work to achieve its full potential.

Recognizing the failure of past congressional actions to solve the problems of slavery, but still convinced that Congress needed to solve the problem, supporters of colonization seized the moment. The rise of benevolent societies empowered non-governmental social organizations to address the social problems of the time. The efforts of the African Institution in England and Paul Cuffe in the United States made colonization a provocative option that would still avoid the divisiveness of security and morality discourses. Colonizationists met in December of 1816, faced with a significant problem and a potential solution which needed significant rhetorical efforts to overcome

the problem of slavery in the United States. How did they do? This question will be the subject of the next three chapters of this project.

PART III:

MOTIVATING COLONIZATION

On December 21, 1816, the first meeting of the Colonization Society convened. Attendees gathered to support colonization and to have that support galvanized by the selected speakers at the meeting. The task of articulating the aims of colonization and motivating support for the endeavor fell to Henry Clay of Kentucky and Elias B. Caldwell of the District of Columbia.

Clay and Caldwell faced the difficult task of negotiating the discursive tensions of slavery discourse. To elevate colonization to a national level, the speakers would need to adopt a rhetorical tact that could overcome the discursive tensions of slavery. The moderate dimension of rhetoric that developed within political discourse provided some hope for colonizationists, particularly given their appeal to Congress for support.

Part II analyzes the speeches of Clay (Chapter Three) and Caldwell (Chapter Four) and assesses how the speakers motivated the colonization project within the context of discursive tension and rhetorical possibility. Chapter Five turns to the Counter Memorial of the Free People of Colour of the District of Columbia—a response to Clay's and Caldwell's motivations—and discerns the layers of critique against Clay, Caldwell, and the motivations of the colonization movement.

CHAPTER THREE

HENRY CLAY'S OPENING REMARKS AT THE COLONIZATION MEETING: NATIONALISTIC APPEALS AND THE FAILURE TO TRANSFORM

In 1816, when the Colonization Society entered the national discourse on slavery, Henry Clay stood at the forefront of U.S. politics. The "old triumvirate" of republican leaders—Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Albert Gallatin—were still alive, but growing old. New leaders emerged in their wake and Clay was prominent among them.[1] Clay earned political cache through his commanding oratory. Of Clay's first appearance in the Senate in 1805, John Quincy Adams wrote, "Mr. Clay, the new member from Kentucky . . . is quite a young man—an orator—and a republican of first fire."[2] By the time of the germinal colonization meeting eleven years later—where Clay would serve as Chair—the Kentuckian had ascended to the role of Speaker of the House where he put his stamp on nearly every important issue of the time.[3]

As Speaker, Clay became well-practiced in political economic discourse, an important skill given the national purpose of the colonization movement. Even more, the moderate rhetoric that developed through political economic discourse helped overcome divisions concerning slavery and, colonizationists hoped, would help to define colonization as a moderate solution to the problems of slavery. Clay's name, political

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[1] Carl Schurz, *Henry Clay*. 2 vols. (1887-1899; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), I: 127.

[2] John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*. Charles Francis Adams, ed. 12 vol. (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1969), I: 444.

[3] Robert T. Oliver, "Studies in the Political and Social Views of the Slave-Struggle Orators," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 23 (1937): 409.

power, and rhetorical prowess could significantly aid the meeting's purpose. The participation of Clay was a boon for the national colonization movement.

The colonization meeting had the potential of benefiting Clay, too. Prior to the meeting, Clay had an unclear public position on slavery. Clay said virtually nothing about slavery in legislative contexts.[4] A pair of public letters written in 1798 by "Scaevola"—believed to be Clay—denounced slavery. Such audacity was, however, delivered under the cover of anonymity. When not writing under a pseudonym, Clay's position on slavery was more tenuous. As Robert Remini explains, it was well-known that Speaker Clay "regarded slavery as an evil, despite the fact that he was a slaveowner."[5] For a man who was known to denounce the institution of slavery (though not publicly) while actively participating in it, colonization provided a fitting alternative to the extreme positions of immediately emancipating slaves or maintaining slavery in the status quo.

Colonization would not be a politically risky project for Clay to support. The national focus of the colonization effort fit with the tenor of Clay's nationalistic support of improving U.S. infrastructure. In terms of local politics, a colonization society already operated within his home state of Kentucky and had petitioned the federal government for material support.[6] In both national and local politics, Clay had little to lose if he supported colonization and much to gain if his support of colonization led to the resolution of the problem of slavery in the United States.

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[4] Having read the Congressional Record of all of Clay's congressional addresses prior to the colonization meeting, there is no mention of slavery that stakes a position on the subject. The argument is tempered by the qualifier, "virtually," to account for existence of extant discourse.

[5] Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 179.

[6] This petition reached the Congress on January 18, 1816, and was referred to the Committee on Public Lands. *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 1st sess., 691.

As Clay took the chair at the colonization meeting on December 21, 1816, opportunities abounded. Clay had the political standing and rhetorical powers that could bring colonization the national support it needed. Supporting colonization could bring resolution to Clay's rhetorical uncertainty on slavery, remain consistent with his political aspirations, and help resolve the festering problem of slavery. Clay offered support of colonization through his presence at the meeting, but more significantly, he delivered brief opening remarks to motivate backing for the project. In turning to those opening remarks, the question remained: In a moment of tremendous opportunity, how well did Clay apply his rhetorical abilities to motivate support for colonization?

To answer this question, the following analysis juxtaposes Clay's rhetorical abilities, his previous rhetorical efforts in Congress, and his opening remarks at the colonization meeting. In doing so, this chapter argues that Clay's remarks at the colonization meeting failed to transform the project into an issue of national significance. Clay's nationalistic appeal—crafted in previous deliberative speeches using moderate rhetorical strategies—was not transferred to colonization. Instead, Clay's speech reverted to the strategies from security and morality discourses, and in so doing, positioned colonization at the center of tensions of slavery instead of beyond them.

The Colonization Society had lofty aims to create a national movement and solve the problem of slavery in the United States. As a notable rhetor, political leader, and chair of the meeting, Clay played a significant role in offering motivation for these aims. To understand the full potential of what Clay could offer to the colonization movement the analysis turns first, to Clay's rhetorical training and the development of his ethos. Moving temporally closer to the colonization meeting, Clay's skill at rhetorically transforming

difficult issues through nationalistic appeals is detailed. Clay's opening remarks at the colonization meeting are then juxtaposed with his previous appeals, demonstrating Clay's failure to bring the same transformative rhetoric to bear on the subject of colonization. The failure of Clay's colonization remarks is then explored more thoroughly in terms of Clay's own performative anxiety on the subject of slavery. The sum of this analysis demonstrates that despite Clay's strength as a rhetor and his ability to transform complex issues through moderate rhetorical strategies, his choices failed to elevate colonization to the same level as other important public matters.

Clay's Ethos:

Rhetorical Training and Political Power before the Colonization Meeting

Nationally-supported colonization would be a grand effort, one that would require deft arguments made by exalted statesmen to move the plan into legislative consideration. The ethos of colonization rhetors could greatly help in that effort. Clay's ethos fit well with the needs of the national colonization plan. The Clay name had become one associated with political maneuvering and rhetorical ability. Such characterizations resulted from Clay's development as a speaker. Clay's rhetorical training exposed him to a variety of different situations that shaped him into an astute rhetor. Exploring Clay's rhetorical training shows his ethos, both in terms of the range of experiences that he could use at the colonization meeting and the symbolic power that his name had cultivated over time. In what follows, Clay's rhetorical training is treated chronologically to demonstrate the growth of Clay's ethos leading up to the colonization meeting.

Clay's ethos was greatly aided by his natural talents. Physically, Clay was a striking man, "tall, thin, sandy-haired, with an expressive face," all of which made him look distinctive.[7] Clay's appearance may have brought visual interest, but he did not disappoint once he began speaking. A contemporary of Clay remarked that his "most unique and admirable" talent was his voice, which "filled the room as the organ fills a great cathedral."[8]

When Clay decided to apply his oratorical abilities to the legal profession, he gained insight into the sensibilities of elite society. Early in his twenties Clay studied the law with Thomas Jefferson's mentor, Chancellor George Wythe of Richmond. On legal argument, Clay believed that no person exceeded Wythe's "thorough preparation, clearness, and force"—qualities which the aspiring lawyer sought to imitate.[9] Clay further cultivated his elite sensibilities by joining the Richmond rhetorical society. Clay was admitted despite his youth and modest upbringing. The rhetorical society provided Clay with the context to associate and converse with such leaders of the time as John Marshall, Bushrod Washington, and Edmund Pendleton. [10] As one of Clay's biographers notes, "Long before he entered a courtroom as a licensed attorney-at-law, young Henry had honed his considerable natural talents as a persuasive speaker to a high level of excellence."[11] Clay's time in Richmond refined his intellect, speaking, wit, and manners.

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[7] Maurice G. Baxter, *Henry Clay and the American System* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 2.

[8] Quoted in Remini, *Henry Clay*, 21.

[9] Henry Clay to Benjamin B. Minor, May 3, 1851, quoted in Remini, *Henry Clay*, 10.

[10] Remini, *Henry Clay*, 11.

[11] Remini, *Henry Clay*, 11-12.

Clay also developed the rhetorical abilities of the less refined, more ungenteel western frontier. In 1797, Clay took his legal practice to Kentucky. Upon moving to the West, refinement was of less utility to Clay in a land where men commonly drank, gambled, swore, and fought. But the resourceful and quick Clay adjusted using his wit and powerful speaking style, characteristics which also earned him more than a few enemies.[12] Clay quickly made his mark at the local rhetorical society.[13] In 1798, Clay delivered an invective-filled impromptu oration against the Alien and Sedition Acts passed by the Federalist government in Washington. Just as he had learned manners in Richmond, Clay honed his ungenteel style of speaking in the West.

Indicative of Clay's identification with Kentuckians was his rise to elected office. Clay served in the Kentucky general assembly from 1803 until 1810, with a one-year stint in the U.S. Senate in 1806.[14] In 1811, Clay filled another term of a Kentucky senator created by the resignation of Senator Buckner Thruston. After two short terms in Washington—during which Clay made his presence known through his characteristic eloquence, sarcasm, and criticism—Clay was elected to the House of Representatives for the term beginning in 1811.[15] By the end of 1810, Clay had officially arrived on the national political scene, a place where he would remain until his death in 1852.

Clay's elevated status in politics owed much to his rhetorical skills. In his election as Speaker of the House in 1811, Democratic-Republican "War Hawks" sought "a man

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[12] Remini, *Henry Clay*, 17-19.

[13] Clay's reputation was overstated, as he lost his first capital murder case and his client was hanged. Remini, *Henry Clay*, 22.

[14] Clay was elected by the Kentucky legislature to fill the remaining term of John Adair. Adair, who was already serving out the term of newly appointed Attorney General John Breckinridge, resigned in a tiff because he failed in his bid for re-election of a six-year term against John Pope.

[15] Remini, *Henry Clay*, 47-51.

who can meet John Randolph [a fellow Democratic-Republican candidate for Speaker] on the floor or field, for he may have to do both."[16] Jonathan Roberts, a representative from Pennsylvania, claimed that "Young Henry Clay . . . is the very man to do it." Those assembled in the room agreed, knowing Clay to have "manly" characteristics, which would serve as a foil to Randolph, who had "a high, shrill, feminine voice" with a sharp tongue.[17] Clay was elected on the first day on the first ballot. Clay reacquainted himself with the congeniality of high society that he had previously known during his time in Richmond. Yet, Clay never completely abandoned the frontier mentality molded in Kentucky.[18]

Clay's dealings during his four-decade long career in national politics earned him the title, "the Great Compromiser," which has traveled with Clay's name through history. Clay's approach to compromise, notes James Jasinski, was to seek moderation, or prudence, between the idioms of accommodation and audacity .[19] When these two idioms are negotiated in ways that are appropriate for the situation, the resulting discourse seems to resolve the acute problems of a given controversy. In Clay's case, the positive side of moderation can be understood in a report printed by the Boston *Courier*, which stated that Clay "combines and directs the greatness of others, and thus, with whatever direction

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[16] Nathan Sargent, *Public Men and Events from the Commencement of Mr. Monroe's Administration, in 1817, to the Close of Mr. Filmore's Administration, in 1853*. 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1875), I: 130.

[17] Sargent, *Public Men and Events*, 130; and Remini, *Henry Clay*, 78.

[18] Clay's rough edges were reveled on a number of occasions, most notably his duel with Humphrey Marshall in 1809 and his public fight with a candidate who ran against Clay for the House in 1816. See Remini, *Henry Clay*, 47-56; and Henry Clay, *The Life, Correspondence, and Speeches of Henry Clay*, Calvin Colton, ed., 6 vols. (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1854), I: 61-2.

[19] James Jasinski, "The Forms and Limits of Prudence in Henry Clay's (1850) Defense of the Compromise Measures," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 454-78.

he takes he moves with resistless might."[20] Clay's adoring biographer from the 1850s, Calvin Colton, notes that "Clear and lucid reasoning claims great consideration, as a controlling attribute of his eloquence . . . Sentiment, with him, is always under discipline, and is often suppressed, to give more effect to the reasoning."[21] Clay's reasoned and unsentimental approach to politics had the rhetorical impact of appreciating unity, an appeal with expansive reach in the growing U.S. republic.

Yet, Clay's rhetorical tact of compromise invited claims of political opportunism or a lack of conviction on important issues.[22] Some suggested that Clay was more of a "Great Pacificator" than a compromiser, as his rhetoric sublimated tensions and anxieties rather than uniting competing positions in enduring ways.[23] For Clay's compromising to exude the aura of prudence, arguments could not smell of the politics of self-interest. As Eugene Garver rightly cautions, the problem with attempting compromise and acting prudently "is precisely to make it into something more than cleverness and opportunism."[24] Clay was aware of the problems of shifty political positions, stating in a 1842 speech in Lexington, "I think it is very perilous to the usefulness of any public man to make frequent changes of opinion . . . It draws around him distrust, impairs the public confidence, and lessens his capacity to serve his country."[25] Although christened the

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[20] Boston *Courier*, quoted in Merrill D. Peterson, *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay, and Calhoun* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 381.

[21] Colton, *Life, Correspondence, and Speeches*, I: 65.

[22] See Vernon L. Parrington, *The Romantic Revolution in America, 1800-1860* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1927), 142-43.

[23] Oliver, "Studies," 426.

[24] Eugene Garver, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 9.

[25] Colton, *Life, Correspondence, and Speeches*, I: 434.

Great Compromiser, Clay recognized that compromise was not viable if seen in public as instability in opinion.

Clay's development as a politician and orator depended upon his ability to adapt to situations and make the appropriate rhetorical gesture to achieve his desired political ends.[26] Clay had quickly earned a reputation for his speaking abilities and his compromising approach to political affairs. The moderate rhetoric of political economy was not only well-known to Clay, but a strategy he mastered. Clay could adapt to situations, knew how to compromise, and had experience in political economic discourse. These talents helped Clay become Speaker of the House. As such, Clay's ethos suited the needs of the national colonization movement.

Protectionism and Expansionism in Political Economic Discourse: Clay's Rhetorical Transformations

Clay's political economic discourse highlighted his ability to navigate difficult rhetorical terrain. On national and international matters, Clay's speeches in Congress negotiated the politics of state, national, and international power. On issues of internal improvements and international engagement in particular, the debate was often divided between those who believed that U.S. interests were better served through protectionist policies and those who advocated that expansionist policies were the better option. A central feature of Clay's advocacy in Congress was his ability to rhetorically transform the tension between protectionism and expansionism within the confines of a speech. Clay's rhetorical transformations were not demonstrations of raw emotion, nor were his

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[26] I borrow the metaphor of making the appropriate rhetorical gesture from Robert Hariman, "Prudence/Performance," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 21 (1991): 26-35.

appeals coldly rational. Rather, Clay harnessed the rhetorical potential of moderate rhetoric to build arguments from impartial judgment, common sense, and the plain style, while also imparting his rhetoric with an appropriate level of emotion.

Colonization was a subject that would require Clay's abilities of rhetorical transformation. Clay's negotiation of protectionism and expansionism would help him tend to another clash of rhetorical movement: the security-morality tension. Clay's skill at rhetorical transformation before and after the colonization meeting suggests that such transformation could be achieved on the subject of colonization, particularly through his nationalistic appeal. In domestic and international affairs, Clay built and deployed nationalistic appeals through moderate rhetoric and, in so doing, transformed the tension between expansionism and protectionism. The nationalist appeal is first explored in its relationship to national affairs, specifically internal improvements. Then, the nationalistic appeal is seen in relation to the subject of international engagement. The nationalistic appeal is then briefly explored in time immediately following the colonization meeting.

Rhetorical Transformation and Clay's Nationalistic Appeal in Domestic Affairs: Debating Internal Improvements

Internal improvements (projects to create roads, build canals and railroads, improve ports) garnered congressional attention, but did not necessarily invite nationalistic appeals.[27] State interests were the primary concern of elected representatives, with the benefits to the Union being a secondary consideration. To be

[27] I am broadly defining internal improvements in this section as including issues of domestic manufacturing and trade. One reason to do so is that the issues were related inasmuch as better roads helped domestic industries, according to Clay. A second reason is that Clay's signature speeches on internal improvements were delivered after the colonization meeting. His early speaking had not yet coalesced around his bill for internal improvements.

sure, Clay's support of internal improvements had his state's interest in mind. He supported those projects because his constituents in Kentucky would benefit.

However, the manner in which Clay motivated support for internal improvements was not so provincial. Clay transformed internal improvements from a local to a national issue by forcing his audience to see the issue from the standpoint of others. In a speech on domestic manufactures, Clay made the issue less about policies and tariffs, and more about the people affected by government action. Clay posited manufacturing not as a faceless enterprise, but as a business run by American families. He stated, "There is a pleasure—a pride (if I may be allowed the expression, and I pity those who can not feel the sentiment), in being clad in the productions of our own families."[28] Clay's familial metaphor made the subject of domestic manufactures resonate with the common social bond of family. From that common experience, then, Clay criticized the powers of judgment of those who could not feel that basic sense of pride in the productions of a family.

The transformative move came when Clay extended his reasonable assessment about domestic manufactures and families to unite the country. Domestic manufactures was not just about families who produced clothing, but was about the preservation of American character. Clay "trust[ed] that the yeomanry of the country, the true and genuine landlords of this tenement, called the United States, disregarding her freaks, will persevere in reform, until the whole national family is furnished by itself with clothing

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[28] "Speech on Domestic Manufactures," March 26, 1810, in Henry Clay, *The Papers of Henry Clay*. James F. Hargreaves, ed. 10 vols. and supplement. (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1959-92), I: 461 (hereafter cited as Clay, *Papers*). Clay had encouraged the use of American made manufactures during his time in the Kentucky House of Representatives. See "Resolution to Encourage Use of American Manufactures," January 3, 1809, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 396.

necessary for its own use."[29] To get to this emotional flourish about "the whole national family," Clay transformed domestic manufacturing from an issue involving families (literally defined) to an issue involving larger, symbolic American family. By the end of the speech, Clay's reasoning moved domestic manufacturing from a protectionist policy and a state issue to a question of national unity.

Clay's nationalistic appeal was also built upon the principles of common sense. Specifically, Clay used gendered and militaristic language to imbue his nationalistic appeal with prevailing ideologies. In one speech, Clay compared opponents of the domestic manufactures bill to a "flirting, flippant, noisy jade" woman. If "fantasies" of "dame Commerce" governed the reasoning of the Senate, he argued, "we shall never put off the muslins of India and the cloths of Europe."[30] Women typically did not participate in the public sphere as many argued that women lacked the intellectual capabilities to govern. From the prevailing gender norms, Clay could easily relay the benefits of his masculine plan. Clay did as much, observing, "We have before us a proposition to afford a manly protection to the rights of commerce, and how it has been treated? Rejected!"[31] At the time, common sense dictated that in matters of state, a manly proposition was superior to a womanly one. The common sense of gender norms helped naturalize Clay's nationalistic appeal.

Clay advocated protectionist policies that benefited manufacturing states. However, his appeal was not to the interest of individuals, but to the interest of the nation. The nationalistic appeal was built from impartial judgment and common sense

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[29] "Speech on Domestic Manufactures," March 26, 1810, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 461.

[30] "Speech on Domestic Manufactures," March 26, 1810, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 461

[31] "Speech on Domestic Manufactures," March 26, 1810, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 463.

principles, and once solidly grounded, given a flourish of emotion to push the appeal beyond the previous terms of the debate.

International Engagement Discourse before the Colonization Meeting: Clay's Moderate Balancing of Protection and Engagement

In economic matters, Clay sought to insulate the United States from foreign influences in order to enhance U.S. strength. He argued that the United States could compete by focusing energies and monies inward. In international matters, however, Clay's nationalistic appeal was cast in a different light. If challenged by an international power, U.S. nationalism demanded engagement and not retreat. The use of the nationalistic appeal for expansion and not protection demonstrated the ability of Clay to elevate a variety of policies to the level of national concern.

Demonstrating his position on international matters, before the war of 1812, Clay delivered a number of speeches in favor of increasing military forces. In one such speech, on December 31, 1811, Clay argued for an increased military force because, "The American character has been much abused by the Europeans, whose tourists, whether on horse on foot, in verse and prose, have united in deprecating it."[32] Clay held fast to the belief that Americans should not fear their European antagonists and that the United States should respond to such abuse. Early in 1812, Clay advocated a response to the representatives who believed that an increase in the navy would lead to war. Clay stated,

> But the source of alarm is in ourselves. Gentlemen fear that if we provide a marine it will produce collisions with foreign nations; plunge us into war, and

[32] "Amendment to, and Speech on, the Bill to Raise an Additional Military Force, December 31, 1811," in Clay, *Papers*, I: 605.

> ultimately overturn the Constitution of the country. Sir, if you wish to avoid foreign collision you had better abandon the ocean surrender all your commerce; give up all your prosperity. It is the thing protected, not the instrument of protection that involves you in war.[33]

Clay offered a motive for international engagement rooted in Americanness. The "thing protected" that Clay referenced was the national character of the United States.

Clay swiftly adapted old premises to new ends, as was the case when the "common sense" of gendered language was employed to motivate engagement, and not protection. With the United States fighting against the British, Clay again descended from the Speaker's chair, and spoke on a bill to raise an additional military force. Here again Clay compared the United States to other nations to boil the blood of American nationalists:

> We are told that England is a proud and lofty nation, which, disdaining to wait for danger, meets it half way. Haughty as she is, we once triumphed over her, and, if we do not listen to the counsels of timidity and despair, we shall again prevail. In such a cause, with the aid of Providence, we must come out crowned with success but if we fail, let us fail like men, lash ourselves to our gallant tars, and expire together in one common struggle, fighting for seamen's rights and free trade.[34]

Clay's scenario for entering the war exhibited the gendered and militarized language also used in his advocacy for internal improvements. Americans would fight "with the aid of Providence," and either "come out crowned with success" or "expire together in one common struggle." Claiming unity of purpose, masculine character, and the defense of

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[33] "Speech on Increase in the Naval Establishment," January 22, 1812, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 619.

[34] "Speech on Bill to Raise an Additional Military Force," January 9, 1813, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 773.

rights as on his side, Clay transcended the potential negative circumstances, leaving little room for opposition to the war.

Clay advanced his nationalistic appeal, even in post-war discourse. At one of many dinners held in honor of U.S. commissioners, Clay responded to a toast in his honor by reflecting, "The immediate effects of the war were highly satisfactory. Abroad, our character, which at the time of its declaration was in the lowest state of degradation, is raised to the highest point of elevation . . . Government has thus acquired strength and confidence."[35] Perception of the United States abroad vindicated the war and entrenched the conception of American character that had been used to rally support. Importantly, Clay's rehearsal of the nationalistic appeal demonstrated that its utility for international issues was not confined to wartime contexts.

During January of 1816, Clay gave a number of speeches defending domestic issues that related to the second war with Britain. On the subject of a direct tax, opponents claimed that the war did nothing but leave the country with an enormous debt. Clay refuted the claim through the nationalistic appeal, stating, "A nation's character is the sum of its splendid deeds. They constitute one common patrimony—the nation's inheritance."[36] In a debate concerning government payment for wartime losses, Clay provided a more philosophical argument appealing to the character of a nation. "Society," Clay argued, "was a compact between those who compose it, by which they agree that contributions for the common defence, shall be equal; and there ought to exist an obligation, by which those losses should be equally apportioned, to which individuals

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[35] "Toasts and Replies at Lexington Banquet," October 7, 1815, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 70.

[36] "Speech on the Direct Tax and Public Affairs," January 29, 1816, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 148-49.

were for a common object exposed."[37] Although the debate had shifted from international engagement to the financial impact of the war, the nationalistic appeal could link the domestic and international, supporting protection or expansion.

Clay's discourse on international matters depended upon a unified and elevated notion of American character similar to that found in his advocacy of internal improvements. Clay was Hawkish on international affairs and protectionist on domestic matters. Nonetheless, Clay could use the strategies of moderate rhetoric to make expansion or protection speak to national character. After the colonization meeting, Clay continued to refine his skill at rhetorical transformation and nationalistic appeals.

Clay's Nationalistic Appeal after the Colonization Meeting

Clay's nationalistic appeal reached a new height with his ability to transform the notion of "union" in his speeches. Clay recast union as a term relating to the business partnership of the states, while also drawing upon some of the emotive meanings of the term. On February 4, 1817—when Speaker of the House Clay stepped down from the chair to speak on his pending internal improvements bill—he surrounded the term union with the concerns of political economic discourse. Clay affirmed,

> With regard to the general importance of the proposition—the effect of internal improvements in cementing the Union, in facilitating internal trade, in augmenting the wealth and the population of the country, [I] would not consume

[37] "Remarks on Payment for Wartime Property Losses," January 6, 1817, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 278-79.

> the time of the committee [of the whole] in discussing those interesting topics.[38]

Although cementing the Union required taking-up arms, one could cement the Union through facilitating trade and thus, supporting internal improvements.

Responding to critics who believed internal improvements should be left to the states, Clay made the very practical argument in favor of a strong Union: "[I]f there were not various objects in which many states were interested, and which, requiring therefore their joint cooperation, would, it not taken by the general government, be neglected, either, for the want of resources, or from the difficulty of regulating their respective contributions?"[39] Clay's response avoided unbridled appeals to union; rather, Clay made the relationship between internal improvements and union seem nearly self-evident, requiring little fiery rhetoric to make his case.

Even when playing upon the emotional meanings attached to union, Clay reminded the audience of the more moderate sense of the term. In an 1818 speech, Clay asked, "What was the object of the convention . . . in framing the constitution? The leading object was UNION." [40] Going forward, however, Clay posited a definition of union that was defined by the plain language of economic transactions and the more mild emotion of "prosperity." Clay opined,

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[38] "Speech on Internal Improvements," February 4, 1817, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 309.

[39] "Speech on Internal Improvements," February 4, 1817, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 309-10.

[40] "Speech on Internal Improvements," March 7, 1818, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 451. In that same speech, Clay quoted from a "letter signed by the Father of [my] Country," George Washington, which stated: "In all our deliberations on this subject, we kept steadily in view that which appears to us the greatest interest of every true America; *the consolidation of our* UNION, in which is involved our prosperity, felicity safety, perhaps our national existence." "Letter of the President of the Federal Congress to the President of Congress, Transmitting the Constitution," September 17, 1787, quoted by Clay in "Speech on Internal Improvements," March 7, 1818, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 452.

> Considering, as I do, the existence of the power as of the first importance, not merely as the preservation of the union of the states, paramount as that consideration ever should be over all others, but to the prosperity of every great interest of the country, agriculture, manufactures, commerce, in peace and in war, it becomes us solemnly, and deliberately, and anxiously, to examine the constitution and not to surrender it, if fairly to be collected from a just interpretation of that instrument.[41]

Clay recognized the emotive potential of the term union, and yet he restrained that emotion by defining union in the moderate terms of political economy.

Clay's use of the nationalistic appeal before and after the colonization meeting revealed his ability to transform the tension of expansionism and protectionism. Such transformation was fashioned through the strategies of moderate rhetoric. The movement toward and achievement of a nationalistic appeal was constituted by Clay's performance of sound judgment, common sense, and an appropriate level of emotion. The moderate rhetoric that helped transform internal improvements into a significant national issue would serve the colonization project well, were such a rhetoric used at the meeting.

Clay's Nationalistic Appeal at the Colonization Meeting: The Failure to Transform

Clay's deployment of the nationalistic appeal at the colonization meeting did not transform the issue of slavery beyond state-level considerations. Rather than developing the nationalistic appeal, Clay's speech implied that colonization was nationalistic, but did not rhetorically transform colonization within the speech. The claims he offered were

[41] "Speech on Internal Improvements," March 13, 1818, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 468.

political economic in subject, but lacked the stability that moderate rhetoric could provide. Without the stable basis for his nationalistic claims, Clay could not establish the layer of appropriate emotion that his previous nationalistic appeals had warranted. Ultimately, colonization was defined as a national issue, but it was not transformed into a national issue.

The Nationalistic Appeal and the Failure to Transform Colonization into a National Issue

In one attempt to define the national significance of colonization, Clay coordinated the language of morality discourse with the language of security discourse. Clay began: "There was a peculiar, a moral fitness in restoring them [African slaves] to the land of their fathers" (25). Acting in accordance with moral fitness, then, congressional support for colonization would "extinguish a great portion of that moral debt which she has contracted" with the continent of Africa (29). Describing the United States' "moral debt" with Africa brought together the notion of "morality"—a symbol associated with pathetic rhetoric of the time—and the overarching assumption that slaves were chattel and not human—conveyed through the concept of "debt," invoking the instrumental dimension of rhetoric. The combination of pathetic and instrumental rhetoric would, it seemed, suggest that colonization could be supported by the national purse.

Yet, Clay's appeal lacked the transformative quality of his nationalistic appeals for internal improvements. To begin, the language of debt and contract failed to move the issue of colonization from the realm of an individual issue to a national issue. As a "debt" to Africa, only those who had acquired "property" were participants in the transaction. To

repay this debt, then, would not be a concern of those who did not hold slaves. The incorporation of the term "moral" only further confused the economic metaphor. The concept of a *moral* debt expanded beyond colonization and, for many advocates associated with morality discourse, its repayment would only be made in full through immediate emancipation of *all* slaves, not just free blacks. Participants in security discourse could similarly find fault in Clay's logic, as it seemed to place a debtor's burden upon those who held slaves. Bringing together the morality and security discourses as he did, Clay cobbled together a claim for the national support of colonization that did not transform the issue. Instead, it stayed true to the commitments of security and morality discourses of the time.

Clay also attempted to claim the nationalistic appeal of colonization through a historical comparison with other nations. In his opening remarks, Clay described the colonization of fugitive slaves from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone in the post-American Revolution years. Given Clay's nationalistic claims in defense of the American character—his speech on domestic manufactures being one such example—one would expect Clay to rally Americans to prove their worth against known international powers, such as Great Britain. Instead, Sierra Leone (a British colony) was an example of the nobility of the cause of colonization, a cause that would both rid the country of a "dangerous" population and bring redemption from ignorance to those colonized (40). Clay seemed to address the security-morality tension, recognizing that colonization would both remove a dangerous population and enlighten a degraded class of people.

However, in the example of Sierra Leone, Clay's nationalistic appeal assembled pieces of security and morality discourses, but not in a manner that transformed the issue

for the audience. To begin, the premise for his argument was a contestable one and not based upon impartial judgment or common sense. The "dangerous" free black population was solidly an issue for slaveholders, whose primary concern was with the maintenance of the slave system and the containment of any hostilities that the system invited. Furthermore, contributors to morality discourse would argue that the resolution of such a danger could be easily and cheaply solved through the abolition of slavery. Noting that another nation state had embarked on colonization, Clay attempted to transfer the credibility of one project into a U.S. national context. The reasoning that supported this move was, however, not transformative. Colonization had been accomplished by another nation, but that did not give colonization the feel of nationalism.

The Nationalistic Appeal and the Failure to Transform Colonization into an International Issue

Just as Clay failed to make colonization seem like an internal program to better the nation, he also failed to make a case for colonization as a matter of international significance for the United States. Clay's international expansionism was about the protection of the American character. Clay argued that by colonizing free blacks to Africa, "[A]mple provision might be made for the colony itself, and it might be rendered instrumental to the introduction, into that extensive quarter of the globe, of the arts, civilization, and Christianity" (23-25). Clay's claim aligned with the pathetic rhetoric of morality discourse, but lacked the nationalistic appeal that motivated previous efforts in favor of international expansion. As such, the claim skewed toward the motivations of morality discourse. Even more, the pathetic appeals of the time argued for the same

advantages, except they applied to all blacks and would be immediate. Although Clay's claim exuded a degree of benevolence, it did not move beyond the terms of the security-morality tension.

Consider a previous Clay speech in which he invoked Christian values to motivate international action. Regarding the second war with Great Britain, Clay argued, "In such a cause, with the aid of Providence, we must come out crowned with success but if we fail, let us fail like men, lash ourselves to our gallant tars, and expire together in one common struggle, fighting for seamen's rights and free trade."[42] Clay used the power of divine Providence as an argument for Americans to unequivocally support the war. No such divine thrust was conveyed by Clay in his opening remarks. Instead, Clay simply asserted a Christian purpose.

Clay also failed to curry the emotions of Americans by comparing the lack of U.S. colonization efforts with attempts by other nations. At the meeting, Clay observed, "We should derive much encouragement in the prosecution of the object which had assembled us together, by the success which had attended the colony of Sierra Leone" (30-32). Then, Clay set forth a brief explanation of how the British colony of Sierra Leone was established. Clay described,

> That establishment had commenced about 20 or 25 years ago, under the patronage of private individuals in Great Britain. The basis of the population of the colony consisted of the fugitive slaves from the southern states during the Revolutionary war, who had been first carried to Nova Scotia, and who afterwards, about the year 1792, upon their own application, almost in mass, had been transported to the western coast of Africa (32-37).

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[42] "Speech on Bill to Raise an Additional Military Force," January 9, 1813, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 773.

Curiously absent from this description was a sense of how Americans should feel toward these efforts. Clay seemed neither praiseworthy nor admonitory toward the United States' former antagonist. Should Americans also look to colonization to not be outdone by their former foe? Or, should Americans be motivated because the results of the Sierra Leone colony were overwhelmingly positive?

In his answer to the last question, Clay seemed only to further muddle the potential emotional level of his message. Clay described Sierra Leone as "struggling with the most unheard of difficulties—difficulties resulting from the ignorance, barbarity and prejudices of the natives; from the climate (which were, however, found not at all insurmountable;—from wars, African as well as European; and such as are incidental to all new settlements)" (37-41; parentheses in original). This description was perhaps Clay's most vivid in all of his opening remarks, which demonstrated the lack of balance in Clay's attempt to motivate colonization as a moderate endeavor. Given the significance of the problems faced by Sierra Leone colonists that Clay described, one would expect him to offer a powerful rationale to legitimize such struggle. Instead, Clay went on to state that Sierra Leone "has made a gradual and steady progress, until it has acquired a strength and stability which promises to crown the efforts of its founders with complete success" (41-43) To put a dull point to it, Clay concludes this line of reason by stating, "We have their experience before us" (43).

Considering Clay's previous arguments for international engagement, his discussion of Sierra Leone failed to use moderate rhetoric to establish a sound basis, which also limited any emotional appeals to his support of colonization. Clay's less-than-ideal description of the Sierra Leone colony was not redeemed or overcome by a more

powerful appeal, such as the recent victory over the very nation (Great Britain) that established the Sierra Leone colony. Ultimately, Clay's move to use Sierra Leone as a way to motivate support for colonization was marred by a lack of emotion to balance the reason-based description he provided.

Concerning colonization and international engagement, Clay had many opportunities to develop an appropriate emotional appeal to work in concert with his appeals to reason. On the religious aspects of colonization, Clay avoided the use of powerful religious language to add pathos to his logos. On the comparison to colonization efforts to Sierra Leone, Clay provided little definition of how the United States should see the British efforts on a similar project. On matters related to the character of the meeting, Clay deferred the authority of the meeting to the audience rather than asserting his own substantial credibility on matters of international significance. As a matter of international engagement, then, Clay provided little that would match his previous rhetorical efforts on such subjects.

Situating Clay's colonization meeting remarks within the context of his nationalistic appeals for internal improvements and international engagement, Clay's performance demonstrated his failure to transform the debate on colonization. Clay did not transform colonization from a state issue, where colonization efforts had previously been based, into a national issue. Clay could make the arguments for colonization that connected with security or morality discourses; yet, in doing so, he relied upon the limiting rhetorical strategies based within security and morality discourses. Absent rhetorical transformation, Clay's nationalistic appeal was nothing more than a patchwork of competing motivations.

Understanding Clay's Failed Nationalistic Appeal:

The Letters of "Scaevola" and the Transformational Struggle

Part of Clay's failure to transform colonization can be associated with his unclear rhetorical approach to slavery prior to the meeting. The colonization meeting provided him with an opportunity to offer clarity to the issue. In terms of his ability to transform other issues through his nationalistic appeal, the speech was a failure. To fully understand Clay's motivational efforts toward colonization requires as look into Clay's "pseudo-public" discourse on the issue of slavery. The letters written by "Scaevola," a pseudonym of Clay's, reveal that even with identity masked, Clay struggled with the rhetorical motivations of slavery. Ultimately, in public and in private, the great statesman and orator Henry Clay could not find a way to reconcile nation and slavery, for or against. The subject confounded his rhetorical abilities.

Clay's Pseudonymous Critique of Slavery:

The Public Letters of Scaevola

Prior to the colonization meeting, Clay's rhetorical approach to slavery was mixed. In his personal life, Clay emancipated some of his slaves as early as 1808, and continued to emancipate and colonize slaves until his death in 1852.[43] From his arrival on the national political scene to the colonization meeting, however, Clay had said very little in public affairs about the issue of slavery. In fact, Clay became most associated with slavery as a result of his role in the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the Compromise of

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[43] Richard L. Troutman, "The Emancipation of Slaves by Henry Clay," *Journal of Negro History* 40 (1955): 179-81.

1850, and to a lesser extent, as co-counsel with Daniel Webster in the Supreme Court case *Groves v. Slaughter* (1841).[44] Colonization and his work on legislative compromises defined Clay as a mediator concerned with balancing the needs of the nation to maintain a union. Despite his later work on the issue, Clay's pre-1816 congressional discourse on slavery was virtually non-existent.

Two of Clay's public letters, written pseudonymously as "Scaevola," were Clay's most substantial discourses on slavery.[45] Both letters—published in the Lexington *Kentucky Gazette*—addressed the subject of revising the Kentucky constitution. The first letter (published April 25, 1798) established the need for Kentucky to call a convention to revise the state constitution and argued that gradual emancipation ought to be included in the new document. The other letter (published on February 28, 1799) responded to critics and defended the need for gradual emancipation to be included in the new constitution.

The letters of Scaevola demonstrate Clay's deep uncertainty about slavery. At the policy level, the letters argued for gradual emancipation. At the colonization meeting, Clay outrightly rejected that emancipation would be a part of the discussion. Even more interesting, however, was Clay's inability to create a cogent appeal appropriate to his moderate aims. In the letters, Clay struggled with finding a way to bring together the moderation of "gradual" with the more radical "emancipation. Thus, even with the relative security of anonymity, Clay struggled to motivate a policy on slavery.

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[44] 15 Peters 449 (1841). On Clay's legislative work on slavery compromises in 1820 and 1850, see Kimberly C. Shankman, *Compromise and the Constitution: The Political Thought of Henry Clay* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999), 101-14. On Clay's legal work concerning slavery, see Maurice G. Baxter, *Henry Clay the Lawyer* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 93-101.

[45] On Clay's authorship of this tract, see Calvin Colton, *The Life and Times of Henry Clay*. 2 vols. (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1846), I: 187.

Clay's insecurity was generated, in part, because of the conflict between the vivid description of slavery's evils and his advocacy for gradual, and not immediate, emancipation. In the first letter Clay provided a visceral account of the inhumanity of slavery, the full text of which read:

> Can any humane man be happy and contented when he sees near thirty thousand of his fellow beings around him, deprived of all the rights which makes life desireable, transferred like cattle from the possession of one to another; when he sees the trembling slave, under the hammer, surrounded by a number of eager purchasers, and feeling all the emotions which arise when one is uncertain into whose tyrannic hands he must next fall; when he beholds the anguish and hears the piercing cries of husbands separated from wives and children from parents; when, in a word, all the tender and endearing ties of nature are broken asunder and disregarded; and when he reflects that no gradual mode of emancipation is adopted either for these slaves of their posterity, doubling their number every twenty-five years. To suppose the people of Kentucky, enthusiasts as they are in the cause of liberty, could be contented and happy under circumstances like these, would be insulting their good sense.[46]

The rich detail of Clay's description was startling, as it was sentimentally definitive—meaning Clay left no room to negotiate the humanity of slavery. The descriptions were also unique because they were not consistent with Clay's rhetorical corpus prior to or immediately after the letters were published. With such a powerful indictment of slavery, the only answer would seem to be immediate emancipation.

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[46] "To the Electors of Fayette County," April 16, 1798, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 5.

Yet, Clay failed to make the ultimate claim for immediate emancipation. Instead, Clay's solution in both the 1798 and 1799 public letters was gradual emancipation. In the February 1799 letter, Clay wrote, "Justice and policy both recommend a gradual emancipation," an approach which did not necessarily address the inexplicable ills of slavery.[47] Clay's second letter demanded that "a constitution which ought to embrace fundamental eternal principles, should be confined to the enumeration and distribution of power."[48] Yet, his adherence to such principles was clearly mediated by practical considerations. "[A]lthough rights are immutable," wrote Clay, "cases may be conceived in which the enjoyment of them is improper." Such cases, for Clay, were endemic in proposals for immediate emancipation, where "[t]hirty thousand slaves, without property, without principle, let loose upon the society would be wretched themselves and render others miserable."[49] In a moment of twisted logic, then, Clay concluded, "that a man may advocate a gradual and oppose an immediate emancipation (as is actually the case,) upon principle."[50] The principle of which Clay wrote was the protection of white security in Kentucky, not the universal principles of freedom, liberty, or justice. Nevertheless, Clay's proclamation of limiting rights as principles attempted to maintain moral rightness.

Reading the two public letters of Clay *qua* Scaevola illustrates Clay's insecurity and inconsistency on the issue of slavery. On the one hand, the mask of Scaevola afforded Clay the necessary cover to make bold public statements about the horrors of slavery. Even in Kentucky—a state where slavery did not have the deep historical roots

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[47] [Scaevola], "To the Citizens of Fayette," February, 1799, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 12.

[48] [Scaevola], "To the Citizens of Fayette," February, 1799, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 13.

[49] [Scaevola], "To the Citizens of Fayette," February, 1799, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 14.

[50] [Scaevola], "To the Citizens of Fayette," February, 1799, in Clay, *Papers*, II: 14.

as in Virginia or South Carolina—Clay's description of slavery would have met strong opposition from the elite, white, voting public. The benefit of anonymity for Clay was evident in the absence of such sweeping, emotional claims about the humanity of slavery in Clay's public discourse. On the other hand, Clay's public letters fit well within his developing persona as a compromiser. Even with authorship concealed Clay failed to argue for immediate emancipation. One could explain Clay's inconsistency on slavery differently and argue that Clay's prudence, his balancing of situational factors with enduring principles, would not allow for such an audacious approach despite his own depiction of the inhumanity slavery. Yet, if that were the case, then there would be no reason for his relative silence on the issue. A survey of Clay's public remarks from the turn of the nineteenth century until the colonization meeting reveals few mentions of slavery, let alone descriptions of the institution in such vivid terms.[51]

Scaevola at the Colonization Meeting

Clay's inconsistent rhetorical approach to slavery gained expression through statements that asserted the strange social position of free blacks in the United States. "That class, of the mixt population of our country, was peculiarly situated," Clay noted, "They neither enjoyed the immunities of freemen, nor were they subject to the incapacities of slaves, but partook in some degree of the qualities of both" (14-17).[52]

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[51] Clay's discourse continued to embody inconsistency on the subject of slavery, at one moment defending in court eight blacks who were unjustly kept in slavery after being promised freedom upon their master's death; and at another moment proposing that a Kentucky bill include provisions that would limit to two years the time in which blacks could bring suit for their freedom. See "Motion Relating to Freedom Claims of Certain Slaves," December 29, 1807, in Clay, *Papers*, I: 312.

[52] The minutes of the meeting on colonization have been transcribed and appear in Appendix I of this project. All references to Clay's introductory remarks refer to line numbers of in Appendix I.

Clay's description of free blacks as neither free nor slaves reflected Clay's own insecurity about the subject of slavery.

Writing as Scaevola, Clay described the horrors of slavery, but then only suggested gradual emancipation as the cure. Clay's reasoning in support of gradual emancipation was the same as his reasoning for colonization: both were grounded in reason at the expense of emotion. Motivated by the dilemma created by the social position of the free black in the United States, Clay offered the following assessment: "From their condition, and the unconquerable prejudices resulting from their color, they never could amalgamate with the free whites of this country. It was desirable, therefore, both as it respected them, and the residue of the population of the country, to drain them off" (17-20). Clay's logic was consistent with his writings as Scaevola, for in neither context was Clay willing to let the practical considerations of the social elites be overcome by emotional claims against slavery.

In the brief instance in which Clay did allow a vivid description to creep into his opening remarks, it worked in the service of a reasonable point. In one such instance, Clay described slavery as "the evils and sufferings which we had been the innocent cause of inflicting upon the inhabitants of Africa" (26-28). Although Clay recognized that slavery was evil and created suffering, the claim was curtailed by the assertion that "we" (white political elites) were innocent inflictors of that suffering. Another use of vivid description that might invite emotional appeal was through another description of the free black population. Unlike before, where Clay described free blacks as "peculiarly situated," Clay went on to depict free blacks in far more hostile terms. Clay asked the assemblage, "[C]an there be a nobler cause than that which whilst it proposes to rid our

own country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population, contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized life and possible redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted quarter of the globe[?]" (43-47). Without the mask of anonymity that "Scaevola" provided, Clay offered less critical observations on the practice of slavery. Yet, the struggle to find a means to motivate colonization remained the same.

In Clay's writings as Scaevola, there was at least the hint of the evils of slavery and the possibility of emancipation. Such potential was eliminated in his colonization meeting remarks, most explicitly when Clay clarified, "It was not proposed to deliberate upon, or consider at all, any question of emancipation, or that was connected with the abolition of slavery. It was upon that condition alone, [Clay] was sure, that many gentlemen from the south and the west, whom he saw present, had attended, or could be expected to co-operate" (50-54). On the subject of slavery, Clay avoided the emotional aspects of his previous writings that worked to criticize the conditions of slavery. Even more, when emotion did enter his speech, it only reinforced the assumptions within security discourses on slavery. Clay did little more than reinforce the security arguments against free blacks and in doing so, failed to find a way to broaden the appeal of colonization to make it a program that Congress would need to support.

Conclusion

In 1816, one could hardly imagine a more fitting and capable speaker to open the colonization meeting. The discourse on slavery had been becoming increasingly tense, but Clay had previously demonstrated that he could manage difficult rhetorical situations.

Even more, Clay seemed to manage those situations with the attention to reasoning and process that had helped assuage the tensions of slavery in political economic discourse. At the colonization meeting, however, Clay faltered. His speech failed to transform the clashing instrumental and pathetic strategies into a unifying rhetorical appeal that could motivate a national movement for colonization.

Internal improvements, international engagement, and slavery were different issues replete with unique circumstances to consider. In this sense, Clay could not deliver the same speech on each issue. Still, Clay's rhetorical approaches to all three issues do reveal some similarities in how he chose to make the argument for a given policy's inclusion in the congressional arena. One similarity that runs throughout these arguments was Clay's creation of unity through transformative appeals. On domestic and international issues, Clay framed the issue in relation to nationalism. Although Clay used the American character to reach seemingly opposite conclusions (i.e., protectionist trade policies and military engagement), the impact of the discourse was the same: to unite his audience through an appreciation of shared American values and experiences. Transformative appeals were even evident in his "Scaevola" letters, in his appeals to humanity as a reason to gradually emancipate. Even in moments where Clay attempted to mitigate the scope of his transformative appeals—as when he argued that one could both support gradual emancipation and oppose immediate emancipation on principle—he sought the affirmation of enduring principles.

A second similarity in Clay's rhetorical approach to national issues is found in what he *did not* attempt to argue. Specifically, Clay's rhetorical approach did not explicitly rely on divisive or dissociative tactics. Clay's nationalistic appeal went

unqualified by the speaker. Despite the veneer of unity, other parts of Clay's speaking suggested that American character was constituted by masculine white men. When dissociation was used by Clay—as was the case when he argued against immediate emancipation—he validated the claim by calling it principled. Exclusion was certainly part of the context of Clay's speaking, with some unstated premises likely circulating amongst Clay's congressional audience. That said, Clay generally did not make such limitations clear, instead, he allowed claims about national character, unity, and principles to resonate without restriction.

Thirdly, throughout the discourse on many different issues Clay created permeable boundaries, relating domestic issues to international, and vice versa. Fighting Great Britain was an act to protect the United States' manufacturing and export industries. Better canals and roads would lead to a stronger defense of U.S. lands. Immediate emancipation was unwise because freed slaves would not have land or property and thus, they would be miserable. Clay's fluid connection of issues was illustrative of his broader approach to national issues leading up to the colonization meetings

Clay's coalescence of rhetorical strategies on national issues prior to the colonization meeting would seem to suggest he would employ a similar approach in order to argue for colonization. In his remarks, Clay advanced common arguments for colonization, such as the inability of free blacks to assimilate and the benefits for free blacks as well as elite whites. In making these arguments Clay did nothing more than provide reasons that had previously been used to support colonization. Moreover, Clay's remarks were not guided by transcendent values, such as national pride, unity, or principles. Rather than appealing "up" to values or ideas that transcend time and

circumstance, Clay's remarks portray colonization as a moderate endeavor justified through individualistic appeals. As such, Clay did not call upon the rhetorical strategies used in his advocacy for other issues for which he sought national attention.

By 1816, Clay was a well known speaker and politician whose talents were called upon to help make colonization a national reality. Within the context of Clay's abilities and his political discourses prior to the colonization meeting, the flow of his appeals were not channeled into the colonization meeting. Although Clay has long been called the Great Compromiser, his discourse at the time of the colonization reveals an unapologetic unionist orator who made nearly every issue about the good of the nation. Clay's remarks at the colonization meeting failed to make such connections, delivering instead a speech of typical arguments concerning colonization. If Clay was to bring something more to the colonization meeting, such a rhetorical character above and beyond his good name, he failed to do so in his speech. Thus, at the conclusion of his remarks, the rhetorical foundation for colonization had gained no more strength than the name Clay could provide.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELIAS B. CALDWELL'S FEATURED ADDRESS AT THE COLONIZATION MEETING: BENEVOLENCE AND THE FAILURE TO TRANSCEND

On January 2, 1817, the *Maryland Gazette* reported that a meeting of "numerous and respectable" participants had assembled in Georgetown to consider the creation of a colony of free blacks. The *Gazette* noted that the meeting's "proceedings [were] fraught with interest." The newspaper promised that complete proceedings of the meeting would be published at a later date, but saw it fit to convey that "the hon. Henry Clay" served as chair and that "Elias B. Caldwell, Esq., in a speech of considerable length, developed the views of the friends of the project."[1] Indeed, the *Gazette*'s observation of Caldwell's speech being "of considerable length" was not surprising, as it was Caldwell who was assigned the task of articulating the weighty purpose of this new national organization.

Caldwell framed his speech with political economic ends in mind, as he conveyed the policy of colonization by addressing its expediency and practicability (69).[2] Caldwell considered the expediency of colonization "in reference to its [colonization] influence on our civil institutions, on the morals and habits of the people, and on the future happiness of the free people of colour" (71-72). The topic of practicability was divided into three parts: " The territory—the expense—and the probability of obtaining their [free blacks']

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[1] *Maryland Gazette and Political Advertiser*, January 2, 1817, n.p.

[2] The expedient and the practical, George Kennedy reminds us, were the basic policy topics in ancient formulations of deliberative oratory. George A. Kennedy, "Focusing of Arguments in Greek Deliberative Oratory," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 90 (1959): 131.

All references to Caldwell's speech will be made parenthetically and refer to line numbers in the version of the speech found in Appendix I to the present project.

consent" (111-12). Dividing the expediency and practicability topics pointed to a few of the many issues that needed to be addressed before colonization could be reasonably elevated to a nationally-supported policy.

In addition to the array of colonization-specific topics Caldwell needed to cover, the overarching discursive pressures of security and morality also demanded attention. Security and morality discourses began to split along sectional lines, with pro-slavery Southerners employing the instrumental appeals of security discourse and Northerners using the pathetic appeals of morality discourse to oppose slavery. To frame colonization as a project worthy of legislative support, Caldwell needed to create an appeal that would connect with Northerners and Southerners, and that would address the topics of expediency and practicability. Political economic discourse, with its emphasis on the moderate dimensions of rhetoric, offered many advantages to Caldwell. But, as we saw with Henry Clay's opening remarks, the use of moderate rhetoric placed tremendous pressure on the rhetor to demonstrate sound reasoning to overcome the discursive tension and motivate colonization at the national level. If Clay could not overcome the security-morality tension, one was left to wonder how Caldwell, a man with less political and rhetorical experience, could fair better. Thus, turning the attention to the featured address at the meeting, the question that looms large is this: Within the context of Caldwell's deliberative purpose and the discursive tensions of slavery, how did Caldwell motivate support for colonization?

Caldwell's featured address at the colonization meeting attempted to overcome the security-morality tension and motivate support for colonization through the use of moderate rhetorical appeals. Caldwell attempted to offer arguments relating to

expediency and practicability that spoke to both Northern and Southern audiences. On its face, Caldwell's speech seemed to overcome the discursive tension of slavery by using both the instrumental and pathetic dimensions of rhetoric that had become increasingly antagonistic in regards to slavery. Specifically, Caldwell's moderate rhetoric found voice in his use of the concept of *benevolence*, a notion that was generally understood in positive terms, but was sufficiently flexible in meaning to offer a broad appeal. Caldwell exploited the rhetorical flexibility of benevolence in order to show that colonization was a program amenable to various (and often conflicting) discourses and audiences.

Although Caldwell's use of benevolence seemed to highlight the moderate dimension of rhetoric to motivate colonization, this chapter ultimately argues that Caldwell's use of benevolence failed to offer a wide-reaching motivation for colonization. Caldwell's use of benevolence failed to transcend the discursive tensions of the time, connecting with the two competing discourses, but not providing a rhetorical strategy that could overcome the force of either the instrumental or pathetic dimensions of rhetoric.

To that end, the first section of this chapter shows how Caldwell used benevolence as an attempt to unite the security and morality discourses in favor of colonization. The second section engages in a deeper rhetorical understanding of Caldwell's use of benevolence, explicating how his use of benevolence falls short of the transcendent possibility of moderate rhetoric. The conclusion reflects upon Caldwell's successes and shortcomings as they relate to motivating colonization as a national movement worthy of congressional support.

Attempting Discursive Reconciliation through Benevolence: Caldwell's Featured Address

Caldwell's use of benevolence to support colonization was a fitting choice in the context of nineteenth century U.S. political culture. Benevolence was a laudable trait that received attention within different rhetorical traditions. As this section will discuss, the concept of benevolence gained authority from both secular and religious rhetorical traditions in U.S. society. After briefly discussing both rhetorical traditions, Caldwell's featured address is understood in terms of its use of the multifaceted concept of benevolence to overcome the discursive tension of the time.

The Rhetorical Power of Benevolence: Secular and Religious Traditions

Benevolence was important in two different rhetorical traditions impacting early-nineteenth century U.S. public discourse: the Scottish Enlightenment and the Great Awakening. These distinct intellectual traditions help to explain how benevolence might connect with slaveholders from the South (with their instrumental concerns of white security) as well as with anti-slavery advocates from the North (with their pathetic concerns of the morality of slavery).

In the Scottish Enlightenment tradition, benevolence was defined by the field of moral philosophy and driven by the science of faculty psychology. Faculty psychologists believed that the brain was comprised of certain regions, each containing a certain faculty or appetite. Thomas Reid, a Scottish moral philosopher, argued that there were three classifications of human faculties: the mechanical (involuntary reflexes), the animal

(instinctive desires, which included "affections," or emotions), and the rational (conscience and self interest).[3] The most intellectually capable humans possessed and cultivated the highest order of the faculties, the rational. The rational faculty was defined in terms of humans' place in the great chain of beings. As Daniel Walker Howe elegantly described, "Mankind lived in a middle state, part of nature yet above it—both body and spirit, animal and divine, neither all good nor all evil."[4] Maintaining one's position of middleness, or moderation, was important to demonstrating that one was neither beast nor god. When a person allowed certain faculties to get out of control—particularly those faculties defined as "passions" or "affections"—then the person violated the harmony of human nature.

The Enlightenment conceptualization of benevolence reflected the tradition's overall emphasis on moderation. At its core, benevolence required an individual to recognize the suffering of another. David Hume defined benevolence as "the appetite, which attends love, is a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd and an aversion to his misery."[5] Benevolence was complicated by the question of how the person came to recognize the suffering. Using Hume as an example, his *A Treatise of Human Nature* posited benevolence as arising in two ways. First, benevolence may arise from the feeling of sympathy. In this scenario a person practices disinterested benevolence because their own benefit is not considered. Second, benevolence may be the outcome of self-concern. In this scenario a person's own feeling of pleasure or pain will lead to the same feeling for

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[3] Thomas Reid, "Essays on the Active Powers of Man," in William Hamilton, ed., *The Works of Thomas Reid: Volume II*, 6th ed. (Edinburgh: Maclachlen and Stewart, 1863), 543, 551, 572, 579.

[4] Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 64.

[5] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, eds. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 382.

another.[6] The ability for benevolence to arise out of selflessness or self-interest allowed a broad range of circumstances in which a person might reasonably claim an action as an act of benevolence.

The concept of benevolence was also significant in British North American religious traditions. In the 1740s, the Great Awakening preachers and specifically, Jonathan Edwards, emphasized the notion of "disinterested benevolence" as the key to salvation. For Edwards, disinterested benevolence was a sentiment displayed by the chosen people. Almost forty years later, Samuel Hopkins refashioned benevolence as the creation of the greatest good for the greatest number of people.[7] Another strand of religious benevolence came from the Quaker tradition. Quakers were the first religious sect to denounce slavery. Their benevolent actions spread beyond the Church. Sydney James, writing of Quaker benevolence in the eighteenth century, states, "Benevolence, for Friends, was, after all, an attitude toward outsiders."[8]

Selflessness was a far more important motivation in religious conceptions of benevolence rather than self-interest.; however, strands of self-interest ran throughout religious discourses. In a sermon on providence, Hopkins preached, "This is a doctrine of divine revelation, and most agreeable to reason, to wisdom, and benevolence; and they who exercise these, in any good degree, must be pleased with it."[9] Hopkins' grouping of

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[6] Hume, *Treatise*, 385-88, 384. See also, Rico Vitz, "Sympathy and Benevolence in Hume's Moral Psychology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 261-275.

[7] William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 1952), 236n2.

[8] Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), x.

[9] Samuel Hopkins, *Twenty-One Sermons on a Variety of Interesting Subjects, Sentimental and Practical* (Salem, RI: Printed by Joshua Cushing, 1803), 287.

reason, wisdom, and benevolence suggested that benevolence was a rational faculty (like reason and wisdom) and that a person who exercised benevolence could find pleasure—a self-interested feeling—in the doctrine Hopkins advanced. Thus, religious benevolence focused more intently on the good of others, but self-interest still found some expression within this tradition.

The Enlightenment and religious formulations of benevolence illustrate the rhetorical potential that this concept provided a rhetor in Caldwell's situation. Benevolence was understood in both traditions to be a positive concept; therefore, arguments that appealed to benevolence would not be dismissed because of the concept's negative connotations. Yet, benevolence provided multiple motivational dimensions, meaning that an appeal to benevolence could be reasonably employed by a speaker whose self-interest was served by the act of benevolence.

In the discourses on slavery, benevolence provided a locus of moderate rhetorical action beyond the legislative arena. Like the concept of impartial judgment that developed within the moderate rhetoric of political economy, the disinterested or selfless dimensions of benevolence demonstrated the rationality of a rhetor. Both the Enlightenment and religious traditions preferred the selfless orientation of benevolence, but both also provided grounds for a benevolent person to act with some semblance of self-interest. Importantly, the balancing of self-interest and selflessness coincided with the basic positions within security and morality discourse. Generally, security discourses focused on the interests of slaveholders and elite whites. Morality discourses more frequently expressed concern for the life and humanity of slaves. The potential for

benevolence to bridge the security and morality discourses would validate its usage at the colonization meeting.

Benevolence in Caldwell's Argument for Colonization: Balancing Self-Interest and Selflessness through Moderate Rhetoric

Taking the floor, Caldwell offered the perfunctory introduction that expressed humility and reluctance that was the norm for men of elite standing (Clay made a similar overture). Demurring, Caldwell stated that "he had hoped that the task of bringing forward the business of this day would have devolved on some person better qualified than himself for this purpose, and with greater claims to the public attention" (60-63). Caldwell's humility did not stop him from describing the advantages of colonization. To that end, Caldwell's use of benevolence highlighted the moderate dimension of rhetoric to motivate support for colonization. Throughout his speech, Caldwell defined colonization as a benevolent act by appealing to the moderating feature of selflessness. At key moments, however, Caldwell inflected his benevolent claims about expediency and practicability with self-interest in order to attend to potential conflicts between security or morality discourses.

The Expediency of Colonization, Benevolence, and Moderate Rhetoric

Caldwell addressed the expediency of colonization in two moves. The first move demonstrated the selfless motivations that compelled colonizationists to act. Caldwell founded the selflessness of whites in history. The presence of free people of color,

Caldwell opined, "[H]as been a subject of unceasing regret, and anxious solicitude, among many of our best patriots and wisest statesman from the first establishment of our independence" (72-74). The problem being long pondered by "our best patriots and wisest statesmen" placed colonizationists in esteemed company. The duration of the struggle—since American independence—demonstrated the long-standing battle in which colonizationists were selflessly engaged. Caldwell elevated the selflessness of colonizationists by openly recognizing the natural rights appeal of morality discourse. Caldwell observed, "We say, in the Declaration of Independence, 'that all men are created equal,' and have certain 'inalienable rights'" (76-77). Caldwell framed the problem of free blacks in the United States in terms that expressed the selfless commitment of colonizationists.

If Caldwell pursued this line of argument (i.e., the pathetic rhetoric of equality and rights), it would place the motivation for colonization squarely within the anti-slavery leaning morality discourse. To restore a connection with the security discourse, Caldwell's second move used an appeal to common sense to curtail the pathetic rhetoric while maintaining the benevolence of colonization. Specifically, Caldwell defined the situation using the logic of separate-but-equal, stating, "Yet, it is considered impossible, consistent with the safety of the state, and certainly is impossible, with the present feelings towards these people, that they cane [*sic*] ever be placed upon this equality, or admitted to the enjoyment of these 'inalienable rights,' whilst they remain mixed with us" (77-81). Unapologetically, Caldwell went on to state, "Some persons may declaim, and call it prejudice. No matter—prejudice is as powerful a motive." If reason was the deciding factor, argued Caldwell, then supporters should continue to demonstrate the

reasonability of colonization through "public acts." Common sense dictated that free blacks and whites could not mix. Such a claim was self evident in security discourse. The development of this claim in reference to protecting the inalienable rights of free blacks made the claim more palatable within morality discourse.

The combination of selflessness and common sense concerning the expediency enhanced the appeal of colonization to a diverse audience. Caldwell's strategic mentions of "inalienable rights," "equality," and "the Declaration of Independence" suggested an appreciation for moral rhetoric concerning colonization. Yet, such pathetic appeals were curtailed by the common sense observations about security. Caldwell's benevolence connected both security and morality discourses in support of the expediency of colonization.

Practicability, Benevolence, and Moderate Rhetoric

Addressing the practicability of colonization, Caldwell's moderate rhetoric described the destination of the colonized in selfless terms. The choice of Africa, instead of within the United States, for a colony of free blacks was initially posited in security terms, as Caldwell posited: "Many apprehend that they [freed blacks] might hereafter join the Indians, or the nations bordering on our frontiers in case of war, if they were placed near us" (116-18). Caldwell would go on to note that there were more noble motives behind African colonization, however, Caldwell's brief mention of American Indians and security served a purpose.[10] This argument employed the rhetorical figure *paralipsis*,

[10] My use of "American Indian" is consistent with contemporary scholars who prefer this phrasing over "Native American" to refer to Native populations in North America known as American Indian, Indigenous, and Natives. See Eva Marie Garroutte, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Devon Mihesuah, ed., *Natives and Academics:*

whereby a rhetor draws attention to a subject by claiming to not bring attention to it. Mentioning the security problems with a free black colony in the western frontier called attention to such an argument while claiming to move beyond it. Caldwell was able to then discuss the selfless reasons for supporting a colony in Africa, while also recognizing the self-interest of slaveholders in the matter.

Caldwell offered a selfless reason for colonizing free blacks to Africa, using the opportunity to layer emotion onto the seemingly mundane topic of practicability. Caldwell had "a greater and nobler object in view in desiring them to be placed in Africa." He then offered the selfless reasons why African colonization was a benevolent policy:

> It is the belief that, through them, civilization and the Christian religion would be introduced into that benighted quarter of the world. It is the hope of redeeming fifty millions of people from the lowest state of ignorance and superstition, and restoring them to the knowledge and worship of the true god. (130-35)

Caldwell's claim drew its authority from the religious tradition of benevolence. He recognized the motivational force of a higher power, noting, "Great and powerful as are the other motives to this measure . . . all other motives are small and trifling compared with the hope of spreading among them a knowledge of the gospel" (135-39). Caldwell's argument suggested that land was not simply a self-interested economic concern; rather, it was needed to spread the word of God to the ignorant.

Writing About American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Russell Thornton, ed., *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); and Jason Edward Black, "*Words True to Both Hearts": Merging Native-U.S. Rhetoric in the Removal and Allotment of American Indians* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, forthcoming).

Caldwell offered two different reasons for colonizing free blacks to Africa. One was motivated by the self-interest of whites. The security reason was deftly offered to assuage security interests. Then, by suggesting the Christianizing of Africa, Caldwell retained the sense of selflessness of colonization efforts. The arguments about territory demonstrated Caldwell was thinking rationally about white security, but also that he was concerned for the moral well-being of the free blacks and native Africans who lacked "civilization and Christian religion."

As he had argued with regard to territory, Caldwell used the religious dimensions of benevolence to argue for the more practical subject of the expense of colonization. Caldwell asserted that colonization was a "great national object, & ought to be supported by the national purse" (162-63). Based on this premise, Caldwell proffered, "there ought to be a national atonement for the wrongs and injuries which Africa has suffered" (164-65). Demanding atonement for slavery, Caldwell would seem to have offended colonization supporters who supported slavery. Yet, Caldwell's bold connection of the sins of slavery to the national government relied on the multiple rhetorical resources of benevolence to navigate a tense subject. Realize, Caldwell's call for atonement was not to be carried out by emancipating slaves; rather, he wanted the government to pay for colonization. Caldwell's seemingly inflammatory statement actually offered a reasonable remedy to the slavery dilemma. Caldwell's claim connected elements of both the self-interested and selfless motivations of benevolence. Those concerned with the well-being of the black population identified with the "atonement for the wrongs and injuries" and funding for colonization. Those concerned for the security of the white population and not so much with the rights of blacks get the desired effect of fewer free (and potentially

troublesome) blacks, funding for colonization, and the continuation of slavery. The strength of the U.S. government was called upon to fund such an endeavor, an appeal that resonated with the nationalistic discourse of the time.

Having developed the benevolence of colonization throughout the speech, Caldwell could then address the extent to which free blacks were willing to be colonized by calling upon the selfless ethos of colonizationists. Caldwell presumed that the benevolence shown by whites would be accepted by free blacks and as such, offered little that was new to his claims of benevolence. Instead of new claims, Caldwell posed a series of questions to reinforce that colonization was a benevolent endeavor. Colonization supporters assumed that if they could find the territory and the finances, the free black population would flock to Africa. Puzzled over such an idea, Caldwell stated, "Among the objections which have been made, I must confess that I am most suprized at one which seems to have prevailed to wit: that these people will be unwilling to be colonized" (176-78). He queried, "What, sir, are they not men? Will they not be actuated by the same motives of interest and ambition, which influence other men? Or will they prefer remaining in a hopeless state of degradation for themselves and their children, to the prospect of the full enjoyment of civil rights and a state of equality? . . . It has been satisfactorily ascertained, that numbers will gladly accept of the invitation" (178-95). Given the lengths that white colonizationists were willing to go, Caldwell could not fathom that free blacks would resist the opportunity. Thus, with no conceivable resistance from free blacks, there would be no resistance to the benevolent act of colonization.

On the subjects of expediency and practicability, Caldwell used benevolence in an attempt to unite the audience in support of colonization. The ways in which the

intellectual traditions of benevolence (secular and religious) aligned with the dominant discourses on slavery (security and morality) made benevolence appear an appropriate rhetorical choice. Using the moderate rhetoric provided by benevolence, Caldwell seemed to have found a strategy that could unite Northerners and Southerners. In its appeal to whites of all regions and all discursive commitments, Caldwell's featured address seemed to make colonization an object of national significance and benefit.

Dialectical and Ultimate Order in Caldwell's Featured Address: The Lack of a Transcendent Appeal

In the above section, Caldwell's featured address at the colonization meeting was understood as a speech fitting of its time. Benevolence, it seemed, could unite the discourses (and audiences) of security and morality for the purpose of supporting colonization. To that end, Caldwell's benevolence drew from the secular and religious traditions of benevolence. The presence of arguments from both traditions demonstrated that colonization was a plan that was needed and compatible with the perspectives of a wide array of Americans. Thus, colonization would be a plan worthy of federal support.

Despite Caldwell's attempt to incorporate aspects of both security and morality discourses through the concept of benevolence, a closer reading reveals that such a strategy failed to overcome the discursive tensions relating to slavery. The discord in Caldwell's speech emanated from his construction of order. In deliberative matters—which Caldwell argued colonization to be—rhetors often face the task of incorporating multiple views to build support for an issue. Kenneth Burke conceptualizes this task as a matter of order. One way to order a variety of perspectives is what Burke refers to as

"dialectical" order. This order is achieved when a rhetor presents various reasons in favor of a proposition, where the relationship is loose, creating a "jangling relation with one another." [11] The other choice available to a rhetor would be to provide a line of reasoning that would place these reasons into a "hierarchy, or sequence, or evaluative series." Such an order would demonstrate the development of the arguments in relation to the other arguments creating an "ultimate" order. According to Burke, the difference between the dialectical and ultimate order is that in the ultimate order, a "guiding idea" or "unitary principle" brings together the different lines of argument.[12]

In the resolution of deliberative conflict, the dialectical order aims for compromise. By contrast, the ultimate order seeks to transcend the arguments involved in the conflict. To transcend, Burke notes, is to offer "superior" arguments to the arguments being contested.[13] Transcendence moves beyond the original terms of the conflict, establishing a "new identity."[14] Burke explains the process of transcendence in the following terms: "When approached from a certain point of view, A and B are 'opposites.' We mean by 'transcendence' the adoption of another point of view from which they cease to be opposites."[15] The new point of view created through transcendence is not simply an additional point of view, but one that also eliminates the tension of the conflict. In compromise, agreement is reached by combining parts of "A" and "B," thereby reducing

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[11] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1950), 187.

[12] Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives,* 187.

[13] Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 10.

[14] Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, (1937, repr. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 336.

[15] Burke, *Attitudes*, 336.

conflict, although such conflict might still exist. In transcendence, a new position is created that eliminates the tension of the conflict altogether.

In Burkean terms, then, what was seemingly a virtue of Caldwell's benevolent strategy (i.e., the flexible motivation and varied intellectual traditions), represented a dialectical order. In the end, the dialectical order that Caldwell used to frame African colonization failed to provide the movement with a rhetorical motivation that could transcend the discursive tensions of slavery.

To understand how Caldwell created the problematic dialectical order in his arguments for colonization, it is necessary to return to Caldwell's uses of benevolence, which remained connected to the sources of conflict, namely the terms of the security-morality tension. The dialectical order of Caldwell's speech was evident in relation to three dialectical relationships: deference and celebrity; self-interest and selflessness; and security and morality.

Colonization and Character: The Dialectical Order of Deference and Celebrity in Caldwell's Featured Address

Caldwell made an argument concerning the character of colonizationists more so through enactment than through explicit appeal. Caldwell's division of the subject of colonization into the expedient and the practicable did not include specific references to character, yet, he was careful to perform the balanced character of an intellectual elite. Caldwell's use of benevolence aimed to elevate the colonization project and, as a consequence, demonstrate the superior character of the rhetor. However, if we consider Caldwell's character beyond the confines of this text with his performance of character

within the text, the issue of character becomes a hindrance to the colonization society's efforts.

Caldwell was neither the most nor least qualified person to deliver the featured address at the colonization meeting. Caldwell was a man of respected character. He was the youngest son of James Caldwell, a Presbyterian minister and Chaplain in George Washington's army. Elias's mother, Hannah, was shot and killed while protecting him from an advancing British soldier. James Caldwell was killed shortly thereafter by a group of outlaws loosely associated with the British army. Upon James Caldwell's death a member of his congregation, Elias Boudinot, administered James's small estate. Boudinot was a judge in New Jersey and a man of significant means, taking it upon himself to raise Elias Caldwell. Elias Caldwell studied the law under the Boudinot and became a lawyer.[16] Notably, at the time of the colonization meeting, Caldwell served as the Clerk of the U.S. Supreme Court. Although this position offered Caldwell political caché, he had few opportunities to develop a reputation for his speaking. It must also be noted that Caldwell's position was not an elected one, thus he had little formal influence on deliberative issues. Unlike Clay, who was originally scheduled to enumerate the need and advantages of colonization, Caldwell did not bring with him the same level of political character.

Caldwell's performance of character within the speech was appropriate for the time. The introduction and conclusion to his speech expressed the reluctance to lead that harkens back to the ancient Roman story of Cincinnatus.[17] Caldwell conveyed that he had

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[16] "Sketch of Elias Boudinot Caldwell; Reprint from *American Monthly Magazine*; By His Granddaughter," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C. Volume 24*, John B. Larner, ed. (Washington City: Published by the Society, 1922), 204-13.

hoped someone more qualified could have taken the duties of the featured speech and that he was "embarrassed" by the high character of those in attendance (60-65). At the conclusion of the speech, Caldwell referred to his own remarks as "crude observations" and "humble endeavors" (199; 202). Caldwell's performance of character conformed, at first glance, to the norms of the era.

However, Caldwell's character lacked transcendence that could elevate the plan for colonization. In the immediate moment, Caldwell was a sufficient selection for delivering the featured speech at the founding of the colonization meeting. Yet, Caldwell was not a man of public renown. He did not seek the prominence that Clay sought in public life. This reluctance can be explained by the way in which character was perceived in the early U.S. republic. On the one hand, a person was not to strive for fame and fortune too overtly, as that could be associated with an imbalanced (or deficient) character. Yet on the other hand, men of intellect and means were expected to strive for celebrity and fame. Writing about the concept of fame in the early republic, Douglass Adair notes that seeking fame was an Enlightenment virtue that men were supposed to seek praise and fame for doing virtuous deeds.[18] George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and James Wilson, all believed that fame and celebrity were important achievements for the virtuous person.[19] The problem for Caldwell, and thus, the problem for the colonization movement, was that his performed deference could be

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[17] Garry Wills documents the Cincinnatus mythology in early-U.S. politics in his book *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

[18] See Douglass Adair, *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair*, Trevor Coburn, ed. (New York: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va. by Norton, 1974); and Douglass Adair, *The Spur of Fame: Dialogues of John Adams and Benjamin Rush, 1805-1813* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1966).

[19] See Wills, *Cincinnatus*, 100-02.

literally interpreted. Caldwell's statement that "a person better qualified than himself" should speak at the meeting was probably a fair assessment of his own abilities and social standing.

In terms of order, Caldwell's character did not provide a transcendent order to his remarks. He did not impart lofty political character upon the proceedings. Henry Clay and Bushrod Washington were men of exalted character. The mere association of their names with colonization gave the organization legitimacy. Caldwell's character aided the colonization society in the immediate moment and Caldwell's character did not hurt the organization. However, given the growing discursive tensions surrounding slavery at that moment, and the desire to make colonization a federally-supported plan, Caldwell's character failed to provide colonization with a transcendent motivation fitting of the circumstances. The character dimension of Caldwell's benevolence becomes one of many arguments for colonization jangling about in his dialectical order.

For Whom is Colonization Expedient?:
The Dialectical Order of Self-Interest and
Selflessness in Caldwell's Featured Address

Caldwell's speech created a dialectical order amongst arguments for the expediency of colonization. The problem occurred in regards to the motivation for benevolence. Secular notions of benevolence allowed for benevolence to be self-interested, meaning that the person acting benevolently could do so for one's own benefit so long as another person was aided. In religious benevolence, self-interest was largely decried as defeating the purpose of benevolence. In Caldwell's expediency arguments,

self-interested benevolence was offered as a powerful reason to support colonization. Addressing the subject of expediency, Caldwell had argued quite reasonably that colonization would have a positive impact on civil institutions in the United States. Yet, that reason-based justification was jettisoned when discussing the "morals and habits of the people." On this subject, Caldwell proclaimed,

> This state of society, unquestionably tends, in various ways to injure the morals and destroy the habits of industry among our people. This will be acknowledged by every person who has paid any attention to the subject; and it seems to be so generally admitted; that it would promote the happiness of the people, and the interest of the country, to get rid of this population, that it is unnecessary to dwell on this branch of the subject. (85-90)

In this passage, benevolence was not explicitly announced. Yet, the self-interested dimension of benevolence functioned to constitute a particular audience for colonization, as the free black population was said to have negatively impacted "*our* people." Spoken by a white man in front of other white men, it was unlikely that free blacks were included in Caldwell's "people." Even more, that such a point could be so quickly dismissed as "unnecessary to dwell on" revealed the assumptions of the audience. Rather than using benevolence to overcome the security-morality tension, Caldwell's benevolence operated within a particular tradition of benevolence (the secular), which aligned with the security discourse at the expense of the morality discourse. Far from transcending the security-morality tension, Caldwell's argument aided one side in his attempt to make morality speak to the practical issue of expediency.

Caldwell's construction of dialectical order in relation to expediency was only made more apparent as he addressed the "happiness of the free people of colour" (273-74). Caldwell argued that happiness (and rights and equality and achievement) could only be achieved through colonization. Continuing the argument about the impossibility of inalienable rights for free blacks, Caldwell advanced a detailed defense of separation for the sake of equality. As before, Caldwell's discussion of expediency concerning the happiness of free people of color utilized a veneer of benevolence to conceal a narrowly construed understanding of colonization's benefit. For example, Caldwell argued, "by collecting them together where they would enjoy equal rights and privileges with those around them" (92). "Equal rights and privileges" seemed to support natural rights, a concept embodied in the moral and political history of the United States; yet, such rights could only be found after "collecting them together." Upon constraining the expansive concept of equality, Caldwell described the plight of free blacks in the lofty language of morality. The current situation "cramps the energies of the soul," and "represses every vigorous effort towards moral or intellectual greatness" of free blacks (94-95). Colonization created an incentive, Caldwell told the audience, and the audience would not be exercising their own greatness if such incentives were not provided for the "brutes" (106). On the subject of free black happiness, the importance of distance and separation was maintained, a key claim in security discourses. Equal rights and privileges were important values in moral discourses, yet security was once again privileged over all others.

Caldwell's discussion of expediency sought to establish the exigency of colonization in the historic moment. Caldwell argued that colonization would help the

civic institutions, the morals and industry of Americans, and the happiness of free blacks. However, Caldwell's use of benevolence failed to unify the competing discourses or transcend the differences that existed among colonization supporters. Instead, benevolence was used atomically. Although falling under the umbrella of benevolence, isolated sentences or phrases could be thought to connect to either security or morality discourses. This illustrates the problem of Caldwell's dialectical order. Although both sides could relate to the argument, the security-morality tension was not transformed. As a result, Caldwell's arguments about expediency failed to craft colonization as a synthesis in slavery discourse.

Discordant Motivations on Practicability: The Dialectical Order of Security and Morality in Caldwell's Featured Address

Caldwell's consideration of the practicability of colonization addressed the topics of the territory, the expense, and obtaining the consent of free blacks. Caldwell's argument for practicability reflected some overtures of benevolence, yet any transformational power that benevolent appeals might have had was negated by Caldwell's primary concern with white security. Caldwell also offered arguments that purported to care for the well-being of the free blacks. There was, however, no guiding principle that could transform or transcend the competing arguments of security and morality.

First, with respect to the territory, or where the free black colony would be located, Caldwell made clear that the priority of colonization was the security of the white population. Regarding territory, Caldwell swiftly argued against the colonization of

free blacks in frontier areas on the American continent. Caldwell averred that a free black colony in the frontier could lead to the collaboration of "Indians, or the nations bordering on our frontiers in case of war" (117). A free black colony on the frontier would also encourage slaves to run away to such colonies, a threat that made such a colony unappealing to many potential supporters of colonization. A hint of selflessness could be detected when Caldwell made the pseudo-scientific claim that free blacks would not thrive in a colony placed in the Pacific Northwest Territories, for "the climate is too cold for their constitutions" (124). The result of this analysis was that Africa, and not any territory near the United States, would be the appropriate territory for a colony of free blacks. The arrangement of Caldwell's claims regarding practicability and expense was appropriate for a specific section of his audience, specifically those slaveholders who were looking for a solution to increase the security of the ruling slaveholder class. Such a choice was heavily weighted on the side of self-interest and white security.

Caldwell's attempt to advance a balanced conception of benevolence also failed due to a preference for self-interestedness. Immediately following the argument about why Africa served as the best territory for colonization, Caldwell offered the following moral plea:

> I have a greater and nobler object in view, in desiring them to be placed in Africa. It is the belief that through them civilization and the Christian religion would be introduced into that benighted quarter of the world. It is the hope of redeeming fifty millions of people from the lowest state of ignorance and superstition, and restoring them to the knowledge and worship of the true god. (130-35)

Colonizing free blacks to Africa would also provide a missionary benefit for the residents of the "benighted quarter of the world." Caldwell's most moving and passionate arguments for colonization came in his description of colonization as an act of Christian benevolence, as when Caldwell observed, "The great movements and mighty efforts in the moral and religious world, seem to indicate some great design of Providence on the eve of accomplishment" (145-47). Caldwell's description of the providential force of colonization brought to light both the selflessness of religious benevolence and the pathetic rhetoric of moral discourse. Caldwell's flourish was, however, limited in its ability to transcend the dialectical order of his speech. Caldwell himself revealed the lack of unity among potential supporters of colonization by stating, "*They* [the Christians in the North] will receive your proposal with joy and support it with zeal; and permit me to say, that it will be of no small consequence to gain the zealous support and co-operation of this portion of the community" (157-59; emphasis mine). Caldwell's emotional characterization of colonization as a Christian project inserted religion and emotion into the discussion of colonization, yet, it was only another independent reason to support colonization. Caldwell's dialectical order continued on the subject of territory, as he attempted to appeal to both secular and religious understandings of benevolence without providing a rhetorical connection between the two.

Interestingly, Caldwell's argument regarding practicability and expense served as an isolated example of the power of transformation in the creation of rhetorical order. The subjects of territory and funding were the defining practical reasons why colonizationists were appealing to Congress rather than taking action at the state level. To address the subject of funding, Caldwell claimed that colonization was too important not

to be funded. Caldwell's approach to the topic of expense was three-fold. First, Caldwell argued that colonization would get funded because it was "a great national object, & ought to be supported by the national purse" (162-63). Such an argument relied heavily on the assumption that colonization was self-evidently important and that everyone would recognize as much. Caldwell's second response further avoided answering the question directly. The expense mattered little, Caldwell believed, because colonization could provide "a national atonement for the wrongs and injuries which Africa has suffered" (163-65). Seemingly abolitionist in its language, Caldwell's statement was not nearly so audacious when one considers how he defined the "wrongs and injuries" against Africa. Caldwell was not denouncing slavery; he was denouncing the slave trade. Caldwell noted that the state and federal governments did as much as they were constitutionally allowed to restrict the slave trade (but, again, not slavery). Third, Caldwell asserted that if the "national purse" could not provide the necessary means for colonization to occur, then "the liberality and the humanity of our citizens will not suffer it to fail for want of pecuniary aid" (171-72). The benevolence of white colonization supporters would make such a worthy endeavor come to fruition.

All three parts of Caldwell's argument about expense cohere, supporting the notion that morally and practically, the expense of colonization should not matter. Caldwell's argument about the expense of colonization demonstrates the rhetorical possibility of rhetorical transcendence and transformation in colonization discourse, while also making clearer the lack of such rhetorical features throughout the entirety of the discourse.

Caldwell's creation of a dialectical order—and his failure to rhetorically transcend or transform the discursive tensions—was punctuated in his consideration of free blacks' willingness to be colonized. Caldwell can only muster questions and not argument when considering the possible objection that free blacks may not want to be colonized. He asked:

> What sir, are they not men? Will they not be actuated by the same motives of interests and ambition, which influence other men? Or will they prefer remaining in a hopeless state of degradation for themselves and their children, to the prospect of the full enjoyment of civil rights, and state of equality? What brought our ancestors to these shores?

Caldwell assumed that all free blacks would flock to Africa if given the chance; yet, those best suited to answer the question (the free blacks) were not given a voice in the meeting. Even more, Caldwell did little in the speech to motivate free blacks. In Caldwell's series of questions one sees the latent appeals to the United States' exploratory heritage. Caldwell's inferential appeal to this heritage adds yet another argument to the cacophony of voices in the speech, the sum of which sing a discordant tune. When moved to speak on how free blacks would perceive this plan, Caldwell's speech had little to offer. Caldwell referred to free blacks as "them," emphasizing that Caldwell's benevolence was a white, self-interested benevolence. Caldwell's inability to empathize greatly limited any impact of his usage of benevolence beyond adherents to the security discourse.

Caldwell's use of benevolence shuttled back and forth between secular and religious usages, between arguments that were consistent with security discourse and arguments consistent with morality discourse. Caldwell failed to transcend or transform

the tensions of the moment, only offering arguments that appealed to each side at the expense of argumentative consistency.

Conclusion

Caldwell's speech, and its use of benevolence as a moderate rhetorical strategy in support of colonization, played a significant role in the colonization movement. Caldwell was appointed, with John Randolph, Francis Scott Key, and others, to draft a memorial to Congress. In that memorial, presented to Congress on January 14, 1817, the theme of benevolence was extended. The memorial appealed to the congresspeople as "patriot[s]" and "enlightened, philanthropic, and practical statesman." Caldwell's address was a defining moment in the history of African colonization in the United States, as colonizationists for decades thereafter recalled the central role of Caldwell's address in defining the colonization project.[20] Caldwell was revered as a founder of the colonization movement and in a manner befitting such a vaulted station, a city in the colony of Liberia was named Caldwell in his honor (to demonstrate the magnitude of this honor, another city was named Monrovia after President James Monroe, a colonization sympathizer). Caldwell's speech was widely referenced and reproduced, helping to solidify the prominence of his benevolent approach to colonization within public discourse.

Despite such prominence, the dialectical order created within the speech greatly hampered the ability of colonization to gain nationwide and federal support. Benevolence provided key words and appeals that *connected* to the discourses of security and morality; yet, those connections failed to *transcend* the tension that had developed between these

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[20] See *The Eleventh Annual Report of the American Society for the Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States, with an Appendix* (Washington: 1828). This was also reprinted in *American Quarterly Review*. December, 1828, 395-425.

two discourses on slavery. The flexibility of benevolence provided an overarching strategy by which such contradictions could be used to support the same goal. It was not long before the problem of order in Caldwell's speech was exposed.

In the first widely circulated and lengthy response to the efforts of the colonization society, William Lloyd Garrison does well to demonstrate the rhetorical problem created by Caldwell. In *Thoughts on African Colonization*, Garrison wrote, "Some of them were undoubtedly actuated by benevolent desire to promote the welfare of our coloured population and could never have intended to countenance oppression. . . . I am willing to concede, that Robert Finley and Elias B. Caldwell, were philanthropic individuals, and that a large number of their followers are men of piety, benevolence, and moral worth." He then queried, "Is the American Colonization Society a beneficial institution?"[21] Admitting the benevolence of some colonizationists, Garrison demonstrated that Caldwell's benevolence failed to provide sufficient motivation for colonization. Caldwell failed to provide an ultimate rhetorical order that could transcend the security-morality tension and prove to men, like Garrison, that colonization was "beneficial."

Colonization sought to offer a solution to the problem of slavery in the United States. To achieve this aim, the movement required support from the public and Congress. To gain such support, colonizationists needed to find a way to get beyond the security-morality tension in slavery discourse. Rhetors throughout the nation were beginning to identify more rigidly with either the instrumental or pathetic dimensions of rhetoric offered in public discourse. To motivate colonization as something other than a

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[21] William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*. 2 parts. (1832; repr. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968), I: 40.

cipher for pro- or anti-slavery advocates, colonizationists needed to employ a different rhetorical approach. What colonization needed was rhetorical transcendence, a way of supporting the movement that did not rely heavily upon aspects of security or morality discourse. Benevolence served as a concept that connected the terms of the conflict, but did not move beyond them. Caldwell's performance at the colonization meeting was a fitting performance for its time. However, it was that groundedness that defined colonization in dialectical, rather than transcendent terms. Thus, at the moment in which a national colonization movement announced itself and defined itself within the discursive tension and rhetorical possibility, its rhetors failed to offer a rhetorical motivation that broke from the tension-ridden status quo.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COUNTER MEMORIAL OF THE FREE PEOPLE OF COLOUR: EXPOSING THE FLAWED MODERATE RHETORIC OF COLONIZATION

The speeches of Henry Clay and Elias B. Caldwell, delivered at the colonization meeting of December 21, 1816, asserted that African colonization was an absolute necessity for both the white population and the "peculiarly situated" free blacks in the United States. By the early afternoon, the colonization meeting adjourned and the national colonization movement had been set into motion. It was not long until the proceedings of the meeting circulated beyond the walls of Davis Hotel, as the words of Clay and Caldwell were printed on December 24 in the *National Intelligencer*. Not only had Clay and Caldwell provided the rhetorical motivations of colonization to attendees of the meeting, their speeches, now publicly circulated, became the definitive articulation of the colonization plan.

Once public, it was not long until the rhetorical motivations of the Colonization Society received a public rejoinder. On December 30, the *Intelligencer* published, "A Counter Memorial proposed, to be submitted to Congress in [*sic*] behalf of the free people of colour of the District of Columbia."[1] Speaking on behalf of "free persons of colour, resident in the district [*sic*] of Columbia, born in the United States, and of parents born there also" (5-6), the memorialists presented themselves as spokespersons for the population that the Colonization Society sought to remove to Africa. The authors addressed arguments in favor of colonization by refuting the colonizationists' moderate

[1] *National Intelligencer*, December 30, 1816, n.p. This "Counter Memorial" has been transcribed and reproduced as Appendix II to this project. All subsequent references to the Counter Memorial will be made parenthetically and refer to line numbers of the appended text.

rhetoric from the neglected perspective of free blacks. Where Clay's and Caldwell's speeches assumed the degraded condition of free blacks, the free people of colour argued "against the assumed right of any individuals whatever . . . to pass judgment on their [free blacks'] condition" (26-27). Also, the free people of colour challenged the benevolence of colonizationists. Noting that some free blacks might resist colonization, the memorialists suggested that the underlying, self-interested motives of colonizationists would surface and colonization would "easily pass from *persuasion to force*" (46; emphasis in original). Rather than arguing that colonization was mutually beneficial to whites and free blacks, the memorialists asserted that colonization could generate more tension. Furthermore, the free people of colour stated that they loved their homeland, defined in the first line as the United States and not Africa (5-6). The impassioned anti-colonization plea called upon "heaven and earth to witness that they would rather die than quit their native country; that they never will consent to go to Africa, or any other country; but that they will cling to this their native soul whilst they have breath, and be buried where their fathers before them are buried" (61-64). The free people of colour offered as many reasons to oppose colonization as Clay and Caldwell had offered in support of it.

Approaching the conclusion of the Counter Memorial, the argument took an unexpected, and somewhat jarring, turn. The free people of colour claimed that colonization was not the answer; instead, the prejudices of color would be remedied "at once natural, easy and efficacious" by "*amalgamation*" (72; original emphasis). Did the free people of colour mean to suggest interracial sex and procreation as the solution? As if there was any doubt as to the term's usage, the free people of colour elaborated, "Among your memorialists are very many young men, of industrious and sober habits, of

ordinary school education, and of mechanic trades, who would not feel themselves degraded by intermarriages with whites" (75-76). As a consequence of intermarriage and procreation, then, "the distinction of color would pass away" (78). The arguments against colonization on the basis of rights, safety, and homeland, although bold, were connected to prevailing values in white American public discourse; suggesting amalgamation transgressed these values. If anything, the suggestion reminded pro-slavery whites of their fear of slave revolts and miscegenation. History had taught that when faced with a threat to their security, whites had taken drastic actions to contain the freedoms and liberties of blacks. By advocating amalgamation, the seemingly-sound appeals to rights, safety, and homeland in the Counter Memorial would likely be totally eclipsed in a white audience concerned for their own safety.

The dissonance aroused by the Counter Memorial's reasonableness and audacity did not go unnoticed. Contained within brackets at the conclusion of the Counter Memorial, the editors of the *Intelligencer*—Joseph Gales and William Seaton—affixed the following subscription:

> The reader will not receive the arguments of the proceeding article as the serious opinion of the writer. His object, it is apparent, is to endeavor, by ridicule, to check the progress of the Colonization Plan, which has recently been started in Virginia and New Jersey, and taken up in this district—we have thought it proper to insert this note, lest any one might mistake for gravity the well-meant irony of our correspondent. (85-89)

Despite the editors' attempt to manage the meaning and reception of the Counter Memorial, such symbols were not so easily controlled. Although the editors marked the

Counter Memorial as "well-meant irony," a reader could also assess the text as serious argument. Even as the editors attempted to discipline the meaning of the Counter Memorial, a number of questions remained. Was the Counter Memorial serious argument or was it ironic? In either case, was it written by free people of colour or was its author white?

As a response to the creation of the Colonization Society, the Counter Memorial was provocative. Unlike the speeches of Clay and Caldwell—where the use of moderate rhetoric portrayed colonization as the answer to the problems of slavery—the rhetorical impact of the Counter Memorial was that it questioned colonization on multiple levels. At the level of argument, the Counter Memorial questioned the necessity of colonization. The free people of colour in the District of Columbia challenged both the expediency and practicability of colonization, as well as challenging the exclusion of blacks from the deliberations on the matter. Yet, the suggestion of amalgamation and the subscription by the editors initiated questions of interpretation, leading the editors to assert that the text was ironic. At the level of irony, the legitimacy of colonization remains a possible interpretation, but such an interpretation becomes more difficult to render when confronted with the figurative meanings invited by the text and the editors. Serious or ironic, the Counter Memorial transgressed the social norms concerning race in the early nineteenth century United States by suggesting that interracial relationships would provide a better solution to the tensions of slavery than colonization. The polysemy, or multiple meanings, generated by the Counter Memorial introduced questions and complexity into the discourse on colonization, ultimately unmooring the rhetorical motivations of the Colonization Society from the supposed stability of moderate rhetoric.

To comprehend the multiple meanings within the Counter Memorial and the destabilizing force of these meanings for the Colonization Society, this chapter investigates three rhetorically plausible interpretations of the text. First, the Counter Memorial is interpreted as *dialectic* argument. In this interpretation, the Counter Memorial is read as representing the "serious opinions" of the free people of colour in the District of Columbia. As dialectic argument, the Counter Memorial questions both the expediency and practicability of colonization by offering explicit claims and refutation. Second, taking a cue from the editors' subscription, the interpretation of the Counter Memorial as *parodic* argument is investigated (with white authorship assumed). As parodic argument, the Counter Memorial questions the efforts of colonizationists by covertly recalling the anxieties of security discourse. The dialectic and parodic interpretations represented individual meanings, both of which highlighted the failure of colonizationists to provide rhetorical motivations that moved beyond the contemporary tensions in slavery discourse. The third interpretation represents a coordination of the dialectic and parodic within the African American rhetorical tradition of *Signifyin(g)*argument. Individually, each interpretation introduced varying degrees of uncertainty into the discourse about colonization. Collectively, the polysemy of the Counter Memorial showed the vulnerability of the moderate rhetoric of colonization to critique from various directions.

The Serious Opinions against Colonization:

The Counter Memorial as Dialectic Argument

In 1816, free blacks were, at best, newcomers to the white elite-dominated public sphere and, at worst, wildly unwelcome participants.[2] To decrease the peculiarity of their participation, many free blacks adopted the conventions of the elite white public discourse. As historian J. G. A. Pocock observes, "[O]ne of the primary contexts in which an act of utterance is performed is that furnished by the institutionalized mode of speech."[3] Crafting a response to the colonizationists in the form of a memorial to Congress provided one such form of "institutionalized" speech for free blacks. As a memorial to Congress, the free people of colour of the District of Columbia responded in the same mode that colonizationists were using to advance their federally-focused scheme. In this interpretation, the Counter Memorial is taken at face value, as an explicit argument whereby the reasoning of the free people of colour pointed to the hypocrisy of colonizationists. In the classical tradition, arguments that begin "from generally accepted opinions" and "reason to establish contradiction" were referred to as dialectic arguments.[4] The dialectic argument against colonization employed tropes such as *metastasis* (to deny and turn back on your adversaries the arguments used against you) and *parrhesia* (frank speech) to point out the contradictions within the moderate rhetoric of colonization. The dialectic interpretation of the Counter Memorial is developed by first, providing a brief

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[2] When referencing the purported authors of the Counter Memorial, I use "free people of colour." When speaking of the population beyond the text, I use the term "free blacks."

[3] J. G. A. Pocock, "The Concept of a Language and the Métier de' Historien: Some Considerations of Practice," in Anthony Pagden, ed., *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 20.

[4] Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, E.S. Forster, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 165b3.

history of dialectic arguments by African Americans against slavery and second, exploring the dialectic argumentation of the free people of colour.

Petitions, Dialectic Arguments against Slavery, and the Black Presence in U.S. Public Discourse

The Counter Memorial would not be the first instance of blacks refuting slavery to a white audience. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, collective petitioning of Congress by blacks challenged slavery through institutional means.[5] In British North America during the 1770s, collective petitioning by blacks was the most available resource for blacks to publicly challenge slavery.[6] The Revolutionary War increased the public discourse about slavery. Blacks were empowered by the bold statements against slavery by American Patriots, who used the metaphor of slavery to describe the oppressive behavior of the British government. Additionally, blacks—enslaved and free—gained political power as both the Americans and the British made appeals directed to blacks.[7] The growing free black community in the North fostered a more public role for blacks to make public arguments about slavery. Coinciding with the opportunity for blacks to participate in public argument was the resistance of whites to such practices. As Dickson Bruce notes, an "exclusivist white national identity" emerged in the 1780s and 1790s in response to the empowerment of blacks during the age of

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[5] Existing evidence suggests that individual slaves petitioned for their own freedom as early as the seventeenth century. Those petitions tended to avoid decrying the system of slavery and instead focused on the particulate circumstances of the slave that warranted freedom. For examples, see Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*. 3 vols. (New York: Citadel Press, 1951-73), I: 1-4.

[6] Aptheker, *Documentary History of the Negro People*, I: 5-12.

[7] Dickson Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 38-40.

Revolution.[8] With the increased presence of blacks in public discourse came an increase in attempts to reduce that presence. This contestation of public argument, race, and slavery helped shape the rhetorical practices of black rhetors of the time.

Managing the rhetorical opportunities and constraints shaped how blacks argued against slavery, most notably in petitions. In the political context of the early nineteenth century, petitions allowed the people to communicate with Congress and seek a redress of grievances. As Susan Zaeske points out, petitioners employed "flattering adjectives" and used language that reflected an awareness of petitioners' subordinate position.[9] Contra Zaeske, Paul Bradley Stewart asserts that the expression of deference and humility was a formal characteristic of all petitions, not just petitions of blacks (or in Zaeske's study, petitions of women). For Stewart, the "persona of humility" exhibited the petitioners' knowledge of the form of petitioning, regardless of race, class, or gender.[10] Elements of Zaeske's and Stewart's positions were evident in the petitions of blacks. Collective petitioning by blacks resembled previous efforts by white anti-slavery advocates to a degree, but blacks were constrained by the racial dynamics of the time. Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish argue that "although petitions of the last decades of the eighteenth century assume the form of requests, they were marshaled by African Americans in an effort to assert their rights."[11] Bold assertions of equality by blacks, if perceived as hostile, could invite the overly restrictive responses that whites often used when

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[8] Bruce, *Origins*, 94.

[9] Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, & Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 13.

[10] Paul Bradley Stewart, "Early American Petitioning (1789-1829), Public Life, and the Public Sphere," (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2002), 180-82.

[11] Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish, "Descendents of Africa, Sons of '76: Exploring Early African-American Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 36 (2006): 2.

threatened. The racial dynamics in security discourse, which helped escalate fears among whites, forced collective petitioners to manage their claims with an eye toward propriety. Although petitioners employed the language of deference, the act of petitioning was an act of citizenship, a bold step in their quest for equality. The act of petitioning the government helped blacks assert their voice into the realm of white politics.

A Counter Memorial "proposed, to be submitted to Congress on behalf of the free people of colour of the District of Columbia" would not be a radical departure from the norms of public argument (2-3). Blacks—free and enslaved—had been petitioning for decades by the time the Counter Memorial was authored. Although it might not have been well-received by many whites in power, the memorial form (a sibling of the petitioning form) would not have been a *de facto* signal of anything other than what the memorial stated. Figurative or representational meanings would not have been the logical interpretation. The Counter Memorial, then, offered a tradition that allowed the reader to receive the arguments as dialectic arguments.

Dialectic Argument in the Counter Memorial:

Questioning the Efficacy of Colonization

In the Counter Memorial, the flawed assumptions of the colonization project were exposed by asserting the rights of blacks to have a say in their future. To do so the free people of colour refuted claims that whites could decide their fate. Such a right was assumed at the colonization meeting, where black participants were notably absent. The dialectic argument was built inductively, starting in the opening paragraph of the Counter Memorial. A series of descriptions characterizing free blacks helped reverse the negative

portrayals on which colonization was based. The Counter Memorial stated that the "free persons of colour" have "good morals," are made "christian [*sic*] by the gospel," and " have at all times endeavored so to conduct themselves, as to merit the good will and friendship of their white brethren" (8-11). Additionally, the document described the intellectual potential of free blacks. When the Counter Memorial praised whites as "an enlightened and polished people" who enabled this potential, the characterization ran contrary to assumptions about the inability of white and black races to mix (9). The free people of colour toed the line by suggesting that blacks were more like whites than most whites were willing to admit. While refusing the stereotypes of the colonization movement, the Counter Memorial also acknowledged the variety of characterizations, stating, "That if, in particular instances, individuals have been found wanting in duty to God and to society, your memorialists trust that such instances have been regarded as exceptions to their general demeanor (11-13). By admitting that some small portion of the black population might behave poorly, but that most are upstanding individuals, this strategy retained the strength of argument against colonization while also gaining credibility by admitting reservations to their claim.

Having characterized free blacks as similar to whites—a feat achieved through a language noticeably void of confrontation—the free people of colour offered a clear statement about their rights. They stood resolved "against the assumed right of any individuals whatever . . . to pass judgment on their [blacks'] condition" (26-27). By building the argument inductively and providing opposing perspectives to those used by colonizationists to support their scheme, the free people of colour took the posture of

educating their interlocutor (i.e., Congress) on the disadvantages of removing blacks from the United States.

The non-threatening posture not only responded to and corrected characterizations of blacks; it authorized a cautionary note to colonizationists. Despite the prominent notion that whites must be secured from violent blacks, the memorialists' warned that colonization "will easily pass from *persuasion to force*" (46) causing "terror and anxiety" (54). The free people of colour used one of the colonizationists' assumptions to create an argument against colonization. Security concerns had motivated many whites to consider colonization as a solution to the problems of slave insurrections. In the Counter Memorial, the roles were reversed. This reversal of assumptions demonstrated the deft use of metastasis to construct a dialectic argument against colonization. Not only were the colonizationists' means contrary to their ends, but the free people of colour were able to employ colonizationists' arguments to oppose the scheme. Situated after the carefully crafted discussion of the character of blacks in the District of Columbia—and one could presume, throughout the United States—the potential for such a claim to be interpreted as confrontational was significantly reduced.

The reasonableness that permeated most of the Counter Memorial was called into question by the extraordinary claim that racial amalgamation would solve the problems of slavery. Regarding color being the source of racial tension, the Counter Memorial stated, "[P]hilosophers and statesmen would see in those prejudices a remedy, at once natural, easy and efficacious . . . the remedy of *amalgamation*" (71-72). The suggestion of amalgamation was presented in reasonable terms, with mention of "philosophers and statesmen," as well as the ease and efficacy of colonization. Despite the attempt to make

amalgamation seem like the logical solution, the audacity of the claim could not be hidden. Amalgamation of the races was a bold claim and out of character in the context of rhetorical practices of the time.[12] The inclusion of such a claim overwhelmed all other claims in the Counter Memorial.

Encouraging amalgamation was taboo, not because interracial relationships were uncommon but because publicity of such relationships would challenge the white-controlled slave society. Some foreign observers perceived the mixing of races and bloodlines as a uniquely American characteristic. In 1782, French-born settler Hector St. John de Crèvecouer observed that Americans were of a "strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country." The mixing of blood was an idealistic trait for Crèvecouer, as it meant "individuals of all races are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."[13] Unrepresented in Crèvecouer's statement was the deep-seated anxieties manifested in the security discourse. Although observable in public life, it is difficult to ascertain the full scope of interracial sexual relationships. Historian Kenneth Stampp claims that

> to measure the extent of miscegenation with precision is impossible . . . But the evidence nevertheless suggests that human behavior in the Old South was very human indeed, that sexual contacts between the races were not rare aberrations of a small group of depraved whites but a frequent occurrence involving whites of

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[12] Widespread public discussion about amalgamation of the races occurred in 1802 and concerned Thomas Jefferson's alleged relationship with Sally Hemmings, a slave. It was not until the mid to late 1820s that public discussion of amalgamation would become an acceptable topic in public discourse. Elise Virginia Lemire, "*Miscegenation": Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1-10.

[13] J. Hector St. John [Hector St. John de Crèvecouer], *Letters from an American Farmer* (London: Printed for Thomas Davies, 1782), 55.

all social and cultural levels.[14]

The tension between the prevalence of interracial sex and the relative absence of discussion about these relationships functioned as, what historian Joshua D. Rothman calls, "open secrets," which were "only dangerously scandalous if widely publicized."[15] White society "tolerated" interracial sex, viewing such interactions with "a measure of forbearance."[16] The priority was discretion; to harshly punish white sexual criminals would not only make miscegenation public, but it would also pass judgment on an act that, in most communities, was allowed to pass with silence.[17]

In light of the context—in which interracial relationships were already occurring—the suggestion of amalgamation could be seen as the climax of the Counter Memorial. Clothed in the demure language of reasonableness, supporting amalgamation could be interpreted as an instance of *parrhesia*, or frank speech. Despite the potential negative consequences, the Counter Memorial encouraged the unity of the races because it was preferable to the separation of the races. The reception of this claim would be helped by ethos constructed throughout the rest of the Counter Memorial. Still, there were few examples on which the Counter Memorial could rely as models for discussing amalgamation publicly, which only exacerbated the frankness of the argument. Looking ahead, colonization and racial amalgamation would be intricately linked in slavery

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[14] Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Knopf), 350-51.

[15] Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 31. The social history of miscegenation in Virginia is detailed in James Hugo Johnston, *Race Relations in Virginia & Miscegenation in the South, 1776-1860* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970).

[16] Martha Elizabeth Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 3.

[17] Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood*, 5

discourse during the 1830s.[18] In 1816, however, exposing amalgamation to public discussion would not help the rights of free blacks.

The argumentative choices of the Counter Memorial, highlighted by the editors' subscription, called into question the legitimacy of the Counter Memorial as dialectic argument. It is difficult to discern if the editors' remarks reflected specific knowledge about the author or if they were aware of authorial intent as rhetorical critics. The phrasing of the subscription suggested that the editors were responding as rhetorical critics. For example, where the subscription stated, "His object, it is apparent, is to endeavor, by ridicule" (86), the clause "it is apparent" suggested a response that one would have upon reading the memorial. There were no insinuations of personal knowledge or past history with a particular writer. The editors' subscription, then, provided a small glimpse into how the Counter Memorial failed to conform to the rhetorical norms at the time.

Although the Counter Memorial contained characteristics that made it seem impossible to be taken seriously, elements of the text threatened the legitimacy of colonization in dialectic terms. To begin, the presence of the editors' subscription suggested that the Counter Memorial could pass as dialectic argument. The editors claimed that the irony was "apparent," but if that was the case, then there was no reason to explain as much to the reader. Additionally, the arguments asserting the rights of blacks took shape in the memorial form, consistent with the practices of the time. Lastly, the suggestion that amalgamation could solve the problems of slavery was consistent with

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[18] See Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 151-55.

social behavior, even if it was unusual to discuss such relationships within public discourse.

Comparing the dialectic argument of the Counter Memorial to the moderate rhetoric of colonizationists, the Counter Memorial raised many questions about expediency and practicability of colonization. Concerning expediency, the Counter Memorial explained that blacks were, like colonizationists, of good moral character and able to be educated. As such, it would be contradictory to colonize free people of colour and not whites. Furthermore, expediency was challenged when the claims about security were turned back on colonizationists and used as a reason to oppose the scheme. On practicability, amalgamation was suggested as a means to recognize the equal rights of blacks and whites and to avoid the problems and costs of colonization. Taken as a dialectic argument, the Counter Memorial informed its interlocutors of an alternate perspective on colonization in a manner that was both rhetorically deft and historically legitimate. Not all of the arguments were equally acceptable as straight-forward claims against colonization. Still, in part or in whole, the dialectic interpretation of the Counter Memorial posed significant challenges to the rhetorical motivations of colonizationists and more generally, to the authority of whites over blacks.

Well-Meant Irony Against (or For?) Colonization:
The Counter Memorial as Parodic Argument

Although there was much about the Counter Memorial that suggested that the text was a dialectic argument against colonization, the editors' of the *Intelligencer* affixed a subscription suggesting subversive motives were at play. These motives, the editors

averred, were "to endeavor, by ridicule, to check the progress of the Colonization Plan" (86-87). The argument that the claims of the author(s) of the Counter Memorial were ridiculing colonization shifted the interpretive framework of the Counter Memorial into the realm of parody.[19] As a parody, the Counter Memorial possessed meaning beyond those stated outright. As Ziva Ben-Porat explains, "[P]arodic representations expose the model's conventions and lay bare its devices through the coexistence of the two codes in the same message."[20] In the case of the Counter Memorial, the model was the institutional appeal made by colonizationists to Congress (represented in this instance by a memorial to Congress). One code was the idea that colonization could solve the problems of slavery. The other code was that amalgamation can solve the problems. The coexistence of these two codes in the Counter Memorial suggested that the aims of colonization were just as improbable as amalgamation. Although the editors attempted to dismiss the Counter Memorial by shifting its meaning to the realm of parody, such a move could not fully contain the critique of colonization levied through parodic argument.

The challenge posed by the parodic interpretation of the Counter Memorial is better understood by briefly exploring how the genre of parody and the trope of irony function in rhetorical discourse. With the relationship between parody and irony situated in American rhetorical theory and practice, the parodic treatment of colonization within the Counter Memorial can be illuminated.

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[19] Linda Hutcheon argues that the "range of intent" of parody "is from respectful admiration to biting ridicule." Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 16.

[20] Ziva Ben-Porat, "Method in Madness: Notes on the Structure of Parody, Based on MAD TV Satires," *Poetics Today* 1 (1979): 247.

Parody, Irony, and Nineteenth-Century

American Rhetorical Practice

Shifting the Counter Memorial from the realm of dialectic argument to the realm of parody, the editors invited complexity, and not simplicity, into the interpretation of the text. Parody, by definition, requires multiple interpretations. From the Greek *parodia*, meaning counter-song, a parodic text functions in opposition to or alongside another text.[21] In either origin of the term, there is some referent text that the parodic text relies upon for meaning. Parody imitates some aspects of the referent text, but also creates "critical difference, which marks difference rather than similarity."[22] Despite the incorporation of formal or linguistic elements from the referent text, the function of parody "is one of separation and contrast."[23] By negotiating imitation and difference, a parodic text has the potential to evaluate texts without engaging in dialectic argument or other explicit types of arguments.

In parody, the trope of irony is used as a signal that the text might have figurative meanings. Hutcheon argues, "Irony appears to be the main rhetorical mechanism for activating the reader's awareness of this dramatization [of the difference between two texts]."[24] The logical relationship between parody and irony emerges from the necessity of duality shared by both concepts. Irony, like parody, relies upon the interaction of interpretations to create meaning. As Kenneth Burke notes, "Irony arises when one tries,

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[21] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 32.

[22] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 6.

[23] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 34.

[24] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 31.

by the interaction of terms upon one another, to produce a *development* which uses all the terms."[25] The interaction of many terms is important, for, as Burke warns, "[I]f you isolate any one agent in a drama, or any one advocate in a dialogue, and see the whole in terms of his position alone, you have the purely relativistic."[26] There is a complexity to irony that moves beyond content-level meanings of the terms. To this point, James P. McDaniel explains that irony "demands fuller recognition of surplus signification for effect."[27] The rhetorical impact of irony comes not from discerning the content-level meaning of the concept expressed; rather irony demands that an auditor discern another meaning from that which is explicitly signified. Or, as McDaniel notes, "Miss the surplus and miss the point."[28] When one selects a meaning—as the editors of the *Intelligencer* did—the "drama" or "surplus" of irony becomes neutralized. The fullness of the irony and the critical distance of parody offers a range of interpretation—a fullness, a surplus, a drama.

The productive potential of irony is connected with the concept of audience. One understanding of irony holds that irony implicitly constructs two audiences: One audience that "gets it" (the audience for the parodic text) and one audience that does not (the audience for the referent text). Despite the division between audiences, irony has the power to create and unify an audience. As Wayne Booth observes, "Often the predominant emotion when reading stable ironists is that of joining, of finding and

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[25] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 512.

[26] Burke, *Grammar*, 512.

[27] James P. McDaniel, "Liberal Irony: A Program for Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35 (2002): 306.

[28] McDaniel, "Liberal Irony," 306.

communing with kindred spirits."[29] Irony might seem to rely on division to create meaning; however, as Burke contends, the fullest expression of irony relies upon a positive relationship between audiences. Burke states, "True irony, humble irony, is based upon a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one *needs* him, is *indebted* to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him *within*, be consubstantial with him."[30] Indeed, there is far more uniting than dividing in true irony. Booth reminds us that "those who grasp any irony" are "often a larger community, with fewer outsiders, than would have been built by non-ironic statements."[31] Irony might seem divisive and exclusive. However, for irony to be an efficacious rhetorical strategy, the central purpose of gaining adherence within an audience must be maintained.

Irony plays an essential role in mediating the relationship between the rhetor and the audience in parodic discourse. Irony affords rhetors a critical distance from their subject without sacrificing the message. In addition to providing the author with critical distance from the subject matter, irony brings an audience closer to decoding or recognizing the parodic structuring of a text. Irony signals the presence of parody, thus aiding an audience in adjusting its interpretation of discourse. The competing rhetorical movements of irony—creating critical distance while also bringing an audience closer to a meaning—demonstrates the importance and fragility of irony within parodic discourse.

The play between critical distance and meaning was particularly suited for tense subjects like slavery. In an early example, Benjamin Franklin (writing as "Historicus") applied his scathing wit to the subject of slavery in a March 23, 1790, letter to the editor

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[29] Wayne Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 28.

[30] Burke, *Grammar*, 514.

[31] Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony*, 29.

of the Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*. Franklin was responding to an argument, made in Congress by Representative James Jackson of Georgia, that the federal government should not interfere with slavery. In response, Franklin related Jackson's argument to a (contrived) historical example, wherein Christians were enslaved by the "Divan of Algiers" for the purpose of engaging in hard labor. A sect called "Erika, or Purists" petitioned for the slaves' freedom, to which the Divan people responded, "The doctrine that plundering and enslaving the Christians is unjust, is at best *problematical*; but that it is the interest of this state to continue the practice, is clear; therefore let the petition be rejected."[32] Cloaked as a history lesson, Franklin demonstrated the hypocrisy of those who would decry the enslavement of Christians by Africans, while engaging in the same condemnable action. Had Franklin offered his anti-slavery argument explicitly, he would risk stirring hostilities within the pro-slavery community. The ironic inversion of Christians from masters to slaves allowed Franklin to stay beyond the fray of political arguments about slavery, while still delivering a message about the hypocrisy of slaveholding.

Parodying slavery was even more pronounced in nineteenth-century American literature. Literature could be more audacious in its parody, as the potentially-confrontational critique of real social problems could be explained away as merely fiction. In Hugh Henry Brackenridge's serially published book, *Modern Chivalry*, irony was used to parody the dominant conceptions of race and social status.[33] Brackenridge's

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[32] Benjamin Franklin to the Federal Gazette, March 23, 1790, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, available at http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/.

[33] Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* is made more significant when considered within the relatively sparse production and circulation of literature at the time. From 1779 to 1829, around 200 works of fiction were produced in the United States, with around twenty works circulating widely. See Helen W. Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings* (New York: Harper, 1956), 2.

narrator, Captain John Farrago, reports on a lecture at the local philosophical society, delivered by (to his surprise) a slave. The slave, "Cuff," was sent by his master to argue "that men were all once black, and that by living in snowy countries, and being bleached by the weather, the skin had gradually become white."[34] Farrago offered a different account of the development of race and complexion: "I am of the opinion that Adam was a tall, straight-limbed, red-haired man, with a fair complexion, blue eyes, and an aquiline nose; and that Eve was a Negro woman." Of their progeny Farrago concludes that some bore the likeness of Adam and some of Eve.[35] Cuff's and Farrago's arguments about race in *Modern Chivalry* reinforced the interpretation of the Counter Memorial as ironic. The reader of *Modern Chivalry* was led to the conclusion that the work was ironic through numerous components that defied conventional judgment. The claim that all people were once black, the idea that whiteness occurred through the bleaching of skin from snow, the different racial identities of Adam and Eve, and the notion of a black slave speaking at a philosophical meeting, taken as a group, moved the reader to interpret the work as figurative, rather than explicit argument.

Parody, signaled by the trope of irony, had tremendous potential to create meaning and reshape understandings. The covertness of parody had already provided some American writers with the means to critique issues of slavery and race without incurring the hostility that explicit arguments about slavery often created. The Counter Memorial similarly found utility in parody as a means to unmask the problems with colonization. Such parodying was not new to slavery discourse. Nonetheless, the Counter

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[34] Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1805; reprint ed. by Lewis Leary, New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1965), 131.

[35] Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry*, 132.

Memorial's ironic dimensions demonstrated the critical power and potential for instability that parody could create in slavery discourse.

Parodic Argument in the Counter Memorial:

Pro-Colonization or Anti-Colonization?

In their subscription, the editors of the *Intelligencer* interpreted the Counter Memorial as an "endeavor, by ridicule, to check the progress of the Colonization Plan, which has recently been started in Virginia and New Jersey, and taken up in this district" (86-88). By demarcating the text as "well-meant irony," the editors suggested that Counter Memorial was not "the serious opinions of the writer" (85-86). There was much in the text to support the editors' observations about the use of irony within the text. However, the assumption that the label of irony would protect the colonization movement from criticism greatly underestimated the rhetorical power wielded by parody. To the contrary, when interpreted as a parody, the Counter Memorial added more uncertainty to the moderate rhetoric of colonization.[36] The parodic arguments of the Counter Memorial brought aspects of the dialectic arguments into conversation with latent ridicule and questionable authorship to add more uncertainty into the discourse on colonization.

In the Counter Memorial, the concept of color was ironically configured to parody the efforts of colonizationists. The first move to parody colonization was to ground the text within a model (which would ultimately be the focus of the parody). The model—in this case, an institutionalized response to the political efforts of colonizationists—was

[36] In this section, I position the Counter Memorial as the rhetor. This choice is consistent viewing the text as a parody, since the identity of the author(s) is called into question by the signs of parody. That is to say, were the authors really the free people of colour of the District of Columbia, or was this stated authorship part of the parody.

stated in the title of the text: "A Counter Memorial proposed, to be submitted to Congress on behalf of the free people of colour of the District of Columbia" (2-3). The Counter Memorial further established its character as an institutionalized response throughout most of the Counter Memorial (lines 5-62), where the language signaled an engagement with the political discourse of the time. The Counter Memorial invoked Christianity (8-9), "personal liberty" (21), "authority of law" (19), and "the [C]onstitution" (30) as reasons why free blacks should not be transported to Africa. Although not all colonizationists would agree with the appropriation of such appeals by free blacks, such arguments were germane to the conversation on colonization. Clay and Caldwell mentioned the Christian motive for colonization, and Caldwell added a lengthy discussion of liberty and law in his featured address.[37] Using language that was similar to colonizationists', the Counter Memorial established its participation in the same mode of discourse as the Colonization Society.

The move from the stability of the referent text to the ridiculousness of the parodic text was achieved by representing the colonizationists' efforts as an attempt to solve the problems of color. The Counter Memorial stated that free blacks in the District of Columbia "have been represented, by some, nuisances in the society in which they live, and that they will continue to be so, so long as the prejudices exist against the *color* of your memorialists" (65-67). There were few colonizationists who would find fault in the statement that there was a prejudice of color (at the colonization meeting Clay stated, "From their condition, and the unconquerable prejudices resulting from their color, they never could amalgamate with the free whites of this country").[38] The transition to the

[37] See the transcript of the colonization meeting in Appendix I, lines 25; 69-75; 132; 141; and 155.

ironic code within this Counter Memorial took shape as the Counter Memorial, with color as the stated problem, established the warrants to an alternative solution to the problem of color.

> For their *color* your memorialists do not conceive themselves answerable to man, it being the gift of God—but they cannot dissemble their astonishment and indignation that those who profess to acknowledge them their *equals* in all things should make a difference of color the cause of their transportation and banishment; they were inclined to cherish the belief, that philosopher and statesmen would see in those prejudices a remedy, at once natural, easy and efficacious. (67-72; emphasis in original)

The Counter Memorial was still functioning within the code of serious public argument, identifying its interlocutors as "philosophers and statesmen" who would be amenable to a remedy that was "at once natural, easy and efficacious." Thus, to this point, there was nothing stated in the Counter Memorial that greatly deviated from prior public discourse concerning slavery and colonization.

Within the tradition of dialectic argument, the solution would likely have been phrased in terms of rights, equality, liberty, or freedom. In the Counter Memorial, "your memorialists mean the remedy of *amalgamation*" (72; emphasis in original). The justification for this solution proceeded with tongue firmly planted in cheek. The Counter Memorial asserted that it was "plain and obvious" that "the enlightened benefactors of the African race [colonization supporters] would not hesitate to set the example for bringing about a state of things, which, more than any other, would hasten the accomplishment of their grand designs" (72-75). The "grand designs," as the Counter Memorial had framed

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[38] Appendix I, lines 17-19.

them, were the plans to eliminate the prejudice of color. The amalgamation of colors through intermarriage would help this goal. The Counter Memorial continued on to address the plausibility of amalgamation (memorialists "would not feel themselves degraded by intermarriages with whites"); the timeframe ("In a few generations the odious distinction of color would pass away"); and the advantages of amalgamation over colonization ("amalgamation may speedily take the place of the detestable one of transportation and banishment") (77-83). The logical support of amalgamation replicated the form taken by colonizationists at the colonization meeting; yet, that such logic was in support of the audacious claim of amalgamation represented the development of a claim against colonization through the interaction of colonization and amalgamation.

Labeling the Counter Memorial as "well-meant irony" asserted that a single meaning could be derived from the text and that this meaning was not formed of "serious opinions." These assumptions were flawed on both accounts. To begin, the use of irony in the Counter Memorial could be interpreted as anti-colonization or pro-colonization. As an anti-colonization argument the Counter Memorial parodied the claims that colonization was expedient and practicable. Suggesting amalgamation as a solution (and that black men would not feel "degraded" by taking-up with white women) was an ironic inversion of social roles that was meant to mirror the ridiculous proposition that was colonization. As an anti-colonization argument, the Counter Memorial questioned the stability of the rhetorical foundations of colonization by revealing the lack of strength driving the colonizationists' scheme.

Ignoring the interpretation offered by the editors (i.e., that the irony was meant to "check" the progress of colonization), the Counter Memorial could also function as a pro-

colonization argument. As a pro-colonization argument, the Counter Memorial offered a parody of morality discourse and not of colonizationists. The key to a pro-colonization interpretation was the use of amalgamation to activate the concerns of white security. Beyond seeming ridiculous, the Counter Memorial provided a cautionary note of what might occur if colonization of free blacks was not supported. Far from stymieing colonization, suggesting amalgamation provided exigency for removing free blacks. Although such an argument supported colonization in general, it did so by elevating the concerns of the security discourse above the motivations of morality discourse. The types of claims that would resonate within morality discourse were offered in the early lines of the Counter Memorial, but only as a referent text from which the parodic text would eventually depart. The pro-slavery interpretation of parody in the Counter Memorial questioned the inclusion of morality concerns that were part of the moderate rhetoric of Clay and Caldwell.

Perhaps most unsettling to the moderate rhetoric of the colonizationists was the general sense of uncertainty and anxiety brought by parody and its multiple layers. The possibility for the moderate rhetoric of colonization to be challenged from such different directions exposed the lack of a transcendent or transformational move in moderate rhetoric. The editors attempted to diminish the critical impact of the Counter Memorial, but they offered little that stabilized the irony within the Counter Memorial. "We have seen that in political or moral satire," writes Booth, "the reconstruction of ironies depends both on a proper use of knowledge or inference about the author and his surroundings."[39] With uncertainty about the author and the point of view, the instability of the irony increased. Such instability only highlighted the precarious rhetorical situation facing

[39] Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony*, 120.

colonizationists and the failure of moderate rhetoric to overcome the discursive tensions of the moment.

Colonizing the Discourse of Colonization:
The Counter Memorial as Signifyin(g)

There was yet another meaning that could be critically discerned from the Counter Memorial. This third interpretation emerged from an understanding of African American rhetorical practices, where the dialectic and parodic elements of the Counter Memorial were enveloped into the rhetorical strategy of Signifyin(g).[40] Signifyin(g) is a strategy of double-voicedness and misdirection, where rhetorical discourse seems to speak in the language of the powerful as a means to direct attention away from the subversive and constitutive meanings of the second voice. The use of the strategy of Signifiyin(g) is described as "Signifyin(g) on" a given text, as the efficacy of Signifyin(g) builds upon the ability of the discourse to speak in the first voice. By Signifyin(g) on the rhetoric of the colonization meeting, the Counter Memorial not only refuted the published arguments of colonizationists, it used the idea of amalgamation to reveal and challenge the implied social order of the colonization project. To delve further into the Signifyin(g) of the Counter Memorial, it is necessary to first, elaborate upon Signifyin(g) as a rhetorical practice. Then, Signifyin(g) is situated within the immediate historical context of the Counter Memorial. From that foundation, the Counter Memorial can be understood as an enactment of Signifyin(g) on the rhetoric of colonizationists.

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[40] The 'g' is placed in parenthesis to "connote the fact that the word is, more often than not, spoken by black people without the final *g* as 'signifyin' . . . The absent *g* is a figure for the Signifyin(g) black difference." Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 51.

Signifyin(g)—Theoretically and Historically Situated

W. E. B. Du Bois noted the "two-ness" of the African American experience, where, "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body."[41] The tension that Du Bois describes manifests in Signifyin(g), a rhetorical strategy that depends upon the difficult balancing of the two voices. Signifyin(g) gains rhetorical force by inching ever-so closely to the language of critique without going so far as to be noticed by the powerful class in society. If the first voice (the voice that speaks in the dominant mode of address) falls short of speaking in the dominant voice, allowing the second voice to be realized by those in power, then the misdirection element of Signifyin(g) has failed and a rhetor is left open to the repercussions of dissent. If the second voice (the subversive voice the serves to embolden those who can discern it) speaks too softly, allowing the dominant mode address to dominate the meaning of the discourse, then the subversive element of Signifyin(g) has failed and a rhetor offers little constitutive force to the powerless audience. The ratio between the voices is an important factor in how Signifyin(g) functions as a rhetorical strategy of the under privileged.

The tropes used by African Americans in Signifyin(g) offered varying levels of explicit critique. In one trope, white texts are made to speak with a black voice—what Gates calls the trope of the Talking Book.[42] In the Talking Book, the black rhetor composed within the formal constraints of the dominant culture. The Talking Book was

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[41] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1907, repr. Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson, 1973), 3.

[42] Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 131. Originally published in London in 1770, Gronniosaw's *Narrative* had been published in seven editions by 1811.

imitative of the dominant cultural norms, likely because a literate black person would have learned to read and write by referencing the texts of the dominant culture. What whites observed as mere imitation was a more complex rhetorical strategy when viewed within the African American tradition of Signifyin(g). What distinguished the Talking Book from mere imitation was the African American experience. That a black person published a narrative, poetry, or letters, or petitioned the government for their freedom, turned these texts into more than literature; they became "texts of defilement" that represented "a reversal of the master's attempt to transform a human into a commodity."[43] By writing (or speaking) in the hallowed space of whites, blacks Signified on the argument that they were more fit for slavery than intellectual endeavors.

An extension of the trope of the Talking Book was the trope of inversion. Inversion went beyond simply inserting a black voice into spheres of white dominance; the use of inversion served to verbally challenge one's oppression, but to do so without penalty.[44] The trope of inversion pushed the second voice of Signifyin(g) closer to the surface of discourse. Inversion was frequently used in the Signiyin(g) of slave spirituals. Slaves would sing in the fields, where white drivers and masters freely listened. However, what the whites took as simple songs to pass the time could function as forms of protest and resistance. Slaves could communicate about escapes or uprisings, or simply mock their oppressors, masking the subversive message within the context of a work song. For example, slaves sang of their master being struck dead in the final stanza of the work song, "Hoe Emma Hoe":

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[43] Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 128.

[44] Grace Sims Holt, "'Inversion' in Black Communication," in Thomas Kochman, ed., *Rappin' and Stylin' Out* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1972), 154.

Caller: Master he be a hard hard man.

Chorus: Hoe Emma Hoe, Hoe Emma Hoe.

Caller: Sell my people away from me.

Chorus: Hoe Emma Hoe, Hoe Emma Hoe.

Caller: Lord send my people into Egypt land.

Chorus: Hoe Emma Hoe, Hoe Emma Hoe.

Caller: Lord strike down Pharaoh and set them free.

Chorus: Hoe Emma Hoe, Hoe Emma Hoe, Hoe Emma Hoe.[45]

Seeming to sing of the biblical figure Pharoah created enough diversion to allow the song to be sung. Yet, the song also served as an indirect criticism of slaveholder practices. This song was one of many examples of the use of inversion by slaves. Through inversion, "Negroes could be relatively candid in a society that rarely accorded them that privilege."[46] Like the Talking Book, inversion represented the performance of a black voice in the controlled discursive space of elite whites. Yet, inversion went a step further, seeking to invert (rather than equalize) the power relationship between blacks and whites.

In the decades prior to the publication of the Counter Memorial, the Talking Book was the most used strategy of public Signifyin(g) on slavery. In public discourse, petitions for freedom employed the language and form of petitioning the government for the redress of grievances, while doing so in the name of oppressed blacks.[47] Petitioning

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[45] The full text of "Hoe Emma Hoe" can be found at the Colonial Williamsburg website, available at http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/february03/worksongs.cfm.

[46] Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 240.

[47] See, for example, the numerous petitions of slaves and free blacks in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of The Negro People in the United States, Volume I: From Colonial Times Through the Civil War* (1951; repr. New York: Citadel Press, 1990), 1-14.

for freedom and against slavery persisted until the gag rule was instituted in 1836; yet, the abolition of slavery in Northern states created large communities of free blacks. The members of these communities—most notably in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia—engaged elite whites through traditional means of public argument, such as pamphlets and newspapers. Free blacks employed the means of democratic discourse and did so within the same forums in which whites discussed issues of public importance.

The Talking Book proved a particular important strategy when the character of free blacks was called into question. For example, in 1793 Philadelphia, Matthew Carey published a pamphlet arguing that, while most free persons of color were helpful during the yellow fever outbreak, "the vilest of the blacks" had extorted and plundered while whites were vulnerable."[48] The rebuttal to Carey's claims came from Absalom Jones and Richard Allen in the form of their pamphlet, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity*, in which the authors argued, in part, that most free blacks were poor and that Carey made more money through the "sale of his 'scraps' [his account of the epidemic] than a dozen of the greatest extortioners among the black nurses."[49] The response of Jones and Allen did not deviate from the dialectic norms of public arguments in the pamphlet medium; they isolated troublesome claims made by Carey, made counter claims, and marshaled statistical data and anecdotes in support of their claims concerning the portrayal of free blacks in Carey's pamphlet. The language of their response was the language of elite whites; the black vernacular "voice"—the mode

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[48] Matthew Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia: With a Statement of the Proceedings That Took Place on the Subject in Different Parts of the United States* (Philadelphia: Printed by the Author, 1793), 87.

[49] Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1794), 87.

of expression that would be used within the slave quarters or at the meetings of free blacks—was not used. By delivering a reasoned response through a public medium of communication, Jones and Allen demonstrated their capacity to reason (which Jefferson and his ilk doubted). Furthermore, the presence of a black voice in such a public forum began the process of normalizing the presence of black voices in public argument.

The response of Jones and Allen to Carey was not the last time the two leaders would assert a black presence in the dominant white public. Jones, Allen, and many other free black leaders organized against African colonization approximately six months before the colonization meeting took place. James Forten, a member of the free black elite in Philadelphia, wrote to well-known colonization supporter (and person of color) Paul Cuffe, relaying news of an anti-colonization protest meeting in June 1816.[50] Despite being members of the African Institution—a British pro-colonization precursor to the Colonization Society—Jones and Allen were signatories of the 1817, "Address to the Humane and Benevolent Inhabitants of the City and County of Philadelphia" and the 1819 follow-up, "The Protest and Remonstrance of the People of Colour in the City and County of Philadelphia"—both fervent anti-colonization texts. In both texts, the rhetorical approach was similar to the *Narrative* response to Carey. Taking the form of a resolution, the facts were asserted in a series of "Whereas" clauses and resolutions derived from those facts. The resolution was not exclusive to white governance; black organizations created constitutions and debated resolutions just as Congress or other white groups did. However, the circulation of such discourses in public had meaning for

[50] See Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 35

blacks beyond the explicit managerial function; it displayed the reasoning abilities of blacks and challenged the prevailing natural theories of racial hierarchy.

The works of Jones and Allen help contextualize the Counter Memorial, not only in terms of the rhetorical practice of Signifyin(g), but also in terms of how blacks Signified on colonization texts in particular. Allen, Jones, and the other leaders in Philadelphia represented the most common approach of how free black leaders engaged elite whites on public matters in the early nineteenth century, the Talking Book. The media and forms of argument were similar to those of elite whites; yet, the authors' free black identity added new layers of meaning to the texts. Jones and Allen's discourse not only provides a salient example of how Signifyin(g) was used in the public arguments of free blacks, their discourse also serves as an important unit of comparison because of their criticism of their work against colonization before and after the colonization meeting of 1816.

When read within the immediate context of Signifyin(g) practices and anti-colonization sentiment, the Counter Memorial sounded both resonant and discordant notes within its moment. Much like the advocacy of Jones, Allen, and the free black elites of Philadelphia, the Counter Memorial engaged the subject of colonization through the rhetorical norms of white public argument. There were also dimensions of the Counter Memorial that were not typical in the public arguments of free blacks; most notably the advocacy for amalgamation. In a pragmatic sense, arguing for amalgamation would likely decimate the perceived reasonableness of the free people of colour and invite the same types of restrictive measures against blacks that resulted from past challenges to white security. However, the rhetorical impact of Signifyin(g) concerned more than just the

practical considerations of the immediate context. Analyzing the Counter Memorial within the developing African American rhetorical practice of Signifyin(g) demonstrates that despite losing the adherence with a white audience, the Counter Memorial succeeded in revealing the rhetorical weaknesses of the colonizationists' scheme.

Signifyin(g) on Colonization in the Counter Memorial:

The Talking Book and Inversion and the Destabilization of Moderate Rhetoric

The Signifyin(g) in the Counter Memorial addressed the absence of black consent in the actions of colonizationists. Colonizationists argued that free people of color maintained a "peculiar" standing as neither slaves nor freepersons—as Henry Clay asserted in his opening remarks of the meeting. To assert the normality of free blacks, the Counter Memorial employed the Talking Book to make the language of citizenship speak in favor of blacks. The first line of the Counter Memorial defined the memorialists as "free persons of colour, resident in the district of Columbia, born in the United States, and of parents born there also." The memorialists "know no country but that of their birth" and are of "good morals" (6-7). Defining the memorialists in this manner tapped into the language of citizenship from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century legislative acts. The first Naturalization Act in the United States, passed in 1790, established the conditions of naturalization as free, white, and resident in the United States for two years, resident in a State for one year, of good moral character, and willing to swear an oath to the Constitution.[51] By 1816, the naturalization standards for citizenship had changed very little.[52]

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[51] "Naturalization Act of 1790." Stat. 1-103. 26 March 1790. Print.

The Counter Memorial stopped short of explicitly claiming that free blacks were citizens; such a claim would be difficult to defend given the prerequisite "whiteness" of citizenship at the time. Instead, the Counter Memorial's tacit argument from similarity—that the memorialists in fact shared many characteristics of a naturalized citizen—shifted the social position of free blacks closer to that of a naturalized citizen (where the term "naturalized" carried the implicit sense of normality, not peculiarity). Even more, the implication of naturalization in the legal sense responded to the scientific arguments concerning the "natural" intellectual inferiority of blacks (a dominant logic in security discourse). Tracing the development of the Counter Memorial's citizenship argument revealed not only a strong argument against colonization, but a refutation of the degraded legal and intellectual status of free blacks in the United States. Working from the rhetorical foundation that suggested free blacks were similar to naturalized citizens, the Counter Memorial questioned the legality of colonizing free blacks *qua* naturalized citizens.

Through the trope of the Talking Book, the free people of colour's Signification provided a subtle critique of colonizationists' arguments about the status of free blacks. On face, the free people of colour seemed to argue with the prescribed rhetorical norms of the moment. Using the memorial form, the free people of colour did not deviate from the rhetorical norms of the time. Groups frequently expressed their purpose through memorials (on January 17, 1817, the Colonization Society would do just that). Additionally, the free people of colour appealed to notions of rights that were part of two

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[52] In 1795, naturalization standards were amended by Congress. The act amended the residency requirement from two years to five. A new provision was added, requiring that a person seeking citizenship declare their intention at least three years prior to becoming a citizen. In 1802, Congress directed the clerk of court to record the entry of all aliens into the United States.

fundamentally American idioms: the Declaration of Independence (with its appreciation of freedom, liberty, and autonomy) and the Constitution (with its inscription of laws and process). As these appeals were familiar to the dominant white audience, the Counter Memorial spoke in the first voice (the white voice). Such familiarity provided the necessary diversion to make a more subversive argument about the status of free blacks in the United States.

The second voice of the Counter Memorial engaged in the unfamiliar task of shifting agency from white colonizationists to the free blacks. The shift was made evident in the following passage:

> They [free people of colour] are free men and consider themselves in every respect qualified to determine for themselves what is, and what is not, for their own benefit and advantage; that indeed of all the rights and privileges which they hold under the constitution and laws, they consider the right to determine for themselves whether they be happy or not, by far the most natural, the most precious, and most inviolable, and your memorialists are firmly resolved never to part with it but with their lives. (27-33)

The free people of colour returned to the theme of what was natural, claiming that the right to choose "whether they be happy of not," was "by far the most natural" of rights. Taking the implication of naturalization to its extreme metaphorical meaning, the free people of colour asserted that they were not suspended in social limbo, but were instead rooted in the United States.

The claims about rhetorical citizenship were generally advanced in the first voice of the dominant white culture. However, there was a more subversive message

empowering a black audience. By turning the hallmark arguments of the American Republic *against* whites, the memorialists used the master's tools against the master. What made such a move particularly empowering for the black audience was the covertness of the act. From a subordinate social position, there was added benefit to not only arguing for one's citizenship, but doing so in a manner that makes whites look foolish. The foolishness of whites was not brought to the surface—a move consistent with the trope of the Talking Book. However, to a class of people who were generally excluded from public discourse and oppressed by language and force, the exposure of white hypocrisy would be appreciated by blacks.

Elsewhere in the Counter Memorial, the second voice was more discernable and sharp. The free people of colour moved to the more transgressive strategy of inversion by using security arguments against colonizationists. Colonizationists had euphemized the fear of slave insurrections and the interracial mixing of the bloodlines, suppressing the intense emotion of these fears by using subdued terms and phrases. Free blacks were, according to Clay, "peculiarly situated;" it was the "unconquerable prejudices resulting from their color" that hindered their ability to "amalgamate with the free whites of this country."[53] Divested from this description was the sordid history of how these prejudices became unconquerable and the agents who worked to differentiate the race. In the Counter Memorial, the fear that permeated the security discourse was brought to the surface, and its meaning was challenged, through treatments of the fear of despotism and the fear of Africa.

The fear of despotism became accessible to free blacks through their rhetorically constituted citizenship within the Counter Memorial. Despotism ran against the principles

[53] Appendix I, lines 15-19.

for which Americans had fought and won a war against Great Britain. As a symbol, claims of despotism recalled revolutionary ideals and what it meant to be American. The fear of despotism that emerged in the Counter Memorial had its origin in the discourse of the colonization meeting. In their respective speeches, Clay and Caldwell suggested that free blacks were not and could not be happy in the United States due to their odd social position. Caldwell went so far as to apply the Declaration of Independence to free people of color:

> We say, in the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal," and have certain "inalienable rights." Yet, it is considered impossible, consistently with the safety of the state, and certainly is impossible, with the present feelings towards these people, that they cane [*sic*] ever be placed upon this equality, or admitted to the enjoyment of these "inalienable rights," whilst they remain mixed with us.[54]

Caldwell's featured address invited free blacks into the political realm through his application of the Declaration of Independence—perhaps *the* symbol of American political autonomy—to the condition of free blacks. Yet his use of discordant rhetorical appeals left room for critique. Caldwell attempted to discipline notions of equality and rights with "the security of the state" and the "present feelings" of most whites. Freedom versus security, transcendent values versus present circumstances, Caldwell's featured address lacked a unifying feature that remedied the tension between his appeals.

The free people of colour capitalized on the uncertainty of the colonizationists' discordant rhetorical appeals by arguing that colonization would not resolve insecurity; it would create it. Such a reversal was the essence of inversion. The memorialists began by

[54] Appendix I, lines 76-81.

responding to colonizationists' claims that free people of color could not be happy living in the United States, a claim that Caldwell had advanced at the colonization meeting. From this premise, the free people of colour then noted that the colonizationists had taken it upon themselves to pass judgment upon the happiness of free blacks. "When therefore your memorialists are informed that arbitrary associations of men assume to themselves the power to decree that your memorialists are miserable," the memorialists responded, "when in truth and in fact they are content and happy, they cannot forbear in duty to themselves to call the attention of your honorable body to a species of *despotism* as unprecedented in this or any other country, as it is replete with evil to the best interests of your memorialists now and hereafter" (37-42; emphasis mine). Despotism was a political fear, a concern for those engaged in the body politik. Fear of despotism and tyranny motivated the Patriot cause in the American Revolution. Coordinate terms were used to support fears of despotism, as the free people of colour referred to colonization as "voluntary exile" (45). Where the security concerns of whites went virtually unmentioned and unexplained in the colonization meeting discourse, the free people of colour brought fear to the forefront, explicated fear in the political terminology of despotism, and implicated colonizationists in the perpetuation of despotism.

Inverting fear appeals was also made explicit in the Counter Memorial through the exploitation of meanings associated with Africa and its native inhabitants. At the colonization meeting, Africa was characterized as both a problem and a solution. Africa was the land of the savage, yet it was also supposed to provide the trappings of civilization that free blacks could not attain in the United States. Caldwell argued that Africa provided the necessary climate for blacks (the pacific northwest of the United

States being deemed too cold); yet, earlier in the deliberations, Clay used climate as a justification for the early failures of the British free black colony at Sierra Leone (although Clay did claim that the climate was "not at all insurmountable").[55] Clay admitted that previous attempts to colonize Africa—made by Great Britain—confronted significant barriers "resulting from the ignorance, barbarity and prejudices of the natives."[56] Clay argued that a significant motivation for colonization was to Christianize the savages of Africa, yet his façade of benevolence failed to conceal the underlying motivation of security. To wit, Clay asked, "can there be a nobler cause than that which whilst it proposes to rid our own country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population, contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized life and possible redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted quarter of the globe."[57] Despite decrying the savagery of Africans, colonizationists still needed to make the case that Africa was the appropriate location for colonized free blacks. Portraying free black colonists as missionaries was one way; the other way was to admit that the taking of Africans as slaves was, in some way, wrong. Or, as Caldwell put it, "there ought to be a national atonement for the wrongs and injuries which Africa has suffered."[58] Here again Caldwell made an expansive claim concerning the treatment of blacks; and again Caldwell attempted to constrain the scope of his claim. For, in this case, the "national atonement" was not universal emancipation, citizenship, or reparations; rather, the nation could atone by sending a small portion of the blacks in the United States (the free blacks)

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[55] Appendix I, lines 121-29 (Caldwell) and 30-43 (Clay).

[56] Appendix I, line 38.

[57] Appendix I, lines 46-7.

[58] Appendix I, lines 164-65.

to a land foreign to most of them. The tensions in Clay's and Caldwell's speeches were not difficult to discern. Colonizationists were stuck trying to make Africa sound like a fruitful location for colonization, while also maintaining the depiction of Africa's inhabitants (and decedents) as intellectually inferior.

The subversiveness of the second voice reached a climax when the memorialists amplified the obvious contradiction in the colonizationists' depictions of Africa, using the same reasoning to reach the opposite conclusion. Where Clay and Caldwell were somewhat hamstrung by their choice to depict Africa as a site of savagery as well as a nice place for free blacks to willingly relocate, the memorialists' adoption of the ironic, anti-Africa position was full-throated in its description of the horrors of Africa. In this extended excerpt from the Counter Memorial, nearly all of the negative characteristics associated with Africa were boldly asserted as reasons to resist colonization.

> when your memorialists are further instructed that Africa is the place selected for their destination, a country inhabited only by savages and wild beasts—with a burning sun and torturing insects—poisonous exhalations, corrupted water and unwholesome food, your memorialists cannot forbear to indulge a suspicion that something more in intended than meets the eye, and that whilst their self-styled benefactors profess to leave nothing in view but their prosperity and welfare, they are in truth and in fact resolved to banish them from the land of their fathers, which they dearly love, and to deliver them over to be devoured by wild beasts, or destroyed by ferocious savages or a pestilential climate. (46-54)

The free people of colour not only turned the racist renderings of Africa into an argument that empowered free blacks in the United States, but it explicitly debunked colonization

as a benevolent endeavor. There was "more intended than meets the eye" in the colonizationists project, as the "self-styled benefactors" actually attempted "to deliver them [free blacks] over to be devoured by wild beasts." Colonizationists crudely assembled notions of white security and Christian benevolence in their attempt to initiate a national movement for African colonization. Africa was both Canaan and Bedlam. Exploiting this tension in colonizationist discourse allowed the Counter Memorial to not only provide more clarity on the issue of colonization, but to do so using many of the colonizationists' own arguments.

Questions concerning the reasonability and faculties of blacks, a component of both security and political economic discourses, were also challenged by the memorialists at the level of enactment (that is, if a white audience member were to read only the first three-quarters of the Counter Memorial; the last quarter of the Counter Memorial will be discussed shortly). Unlike the discourse of the colonization meeting, the free people of colour avoided the problem of containing rhetorical forces. The memorialists unleashed the full force of ideas such as citizenship, despotism, and African savagery, and allowed the symbols to orbit freely in the text, rather than attempting to contain the expansiveness of these symbols. By enacting a clear position against colonization, without spending energy qualifying their claims, the Counter Memorial gained momentum in its move against colonization. In fact, taking the authorship of the Counter Memorial at face value (as authored by a free black), one could explain the subscription of the editors as confirmation of the successful enactment of superior reasoning in the Counter Memorial. Popular perceptions of the inferiority of the black intellect would create dissonance when the deft reasoning in the Counter Memorial was ascribed to a free black. No claims to the

equality (or superiority) of the black intellect were made in the Counter Memorial, yet at the level of enactment, the free people of colour challenged the claims of inferior reasoning by addressing and rebuking colonization on the terms provided by colonizationists.

By employing the language and forms of argumentation used by elite whites (the first voice of blacks' double voice), the free people of colour inserted a free black perspective into a public discussion to which they were not previously a part. The Counter Memorial was also in conversation with other texts in which blacks sought access to racially regulated public forums, most notably the efforts of slaves to petition for their freedom. In a more immediate context, free blacks in larger Northern cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, exercised their freedom by inserting black perspectives into the realm of pamphlets and public argument. The Counter Memorial made an argument against colonization to the white audience who read newspapers; but it also conversed with earlier black texts in as much as the strategies used in previous works were repeated and revised in the Counter Memorial. The double-voice of the free people of colour—as employing acceptable means of argument in a white-controlled society while also subverting those norms—was perpetrated through the Talking Book. In the Counter Memorial, the strategy of co-opting the language and forms of one's antagonist was a strategy used in previous works by blacks attempting to assert their humanity. Yet, inversion was also at work in the Counter Memorial. Unlike most public discourses produced by blacks in the United States, the Counter Memorial audaciously introduced sexuality into the public discussion of slavery and colonization. Advocating

amalgamation as the solution to the problems of free blacks, the Counter Memorial pushed the second voice beyond the cover provided by the first voice.

The free people of colour challenged the quiescence concerning interracial relationships by not only mentioning that such activities exist, but by suggesting that the encouragement of racial amalgamation would solve the stated problems afflicting free blacks in the United States. The memorialists' progression toward amalgamation began with the discussion of the concept of color. "It is known to your memorialists," the free people of colour stated, "that they have been represented, by some, nuisances in the society in which they live, and that they will continue to be so, so long as the prejudices exist against the *color* of your memorialists" (64-67). The first response to the denigration of their color swiftly noted that "For their *color* your memorialists do not conceive themselves answerable to man, it being the gift of God" (67-68). Quickly asserting color as a dictate of God, the memorialists unmoored the colonization project from its transcendent connection to Christian benevolence. Next, the memorialists attacked the secular dimensions of benevolence claimed by colonizationists. That color was the only reason for relocating free blacks, as Clay and Caldwell articulated at the colonization meeting, the Counter Memorial thusly expressed "astonishment and indignation" at such a trivial rationale (2). If color was the only problem concerning free blacks, then the nation already had within its means the ability to address the problem of color. Or, as stated in the Counter Memorial, "[the memorialists] were inclined to cherish the belief, that philosopher and statesmen would see in those prejudices a remedy, at once natural, easy and efficacious—your memorialists mean the remedy of *amalgamation*" (70-72). From the standpoint of "philosophers and statesmen," a position in which

rationality would be a presumed trait of a person, a solution that claimed to be "Natural, easy and efficacious" would seem difficult to oppose. Appeals to God and reason extended the practice of blacks using the resources of the dominant culture to assert their humanity. However, tropological revision was also at work in the subversive suggestion of amalgamation.

The suggestion of amalgamation Signified upon white racism through the parody of "color" as an *a priori* source of prejudice. The parodic turn became most pronounced when, after previously referring to Congress as "an honorable body" (26) and colonizationists as "self-styled benefactors" (43), amalgamation was connected to benevolence. It was suggested that the "enlightened benefactors of the African race would not hesitate to set the example for bringing about a state of things" (73-74). The free people of colour continued, "Among your memorialists are very many young men, of industrious and sober habits, of ordinary school education, and of mechanic trades, who would not feel themselves degraded by intermarriages with whites" (75-77). Colonization was not necessary, as "In a few generations the odious distinction of color would pass away, and the posterity of your memorialists would find themselves blended with the great American family" (77-79). Using the premise of "color"—which colonizationists used to justify their plans—the memorialists revealed the specious reasoning set forth at the colonization meeting.

The unusual suggestion of amalgamation as a remedy, rather than an ill, transfigured the first voice that was used in the earlier portions of the Counter Memorial. Using parody to challenge colonizationist efforts added another layer of meaning to the Counter Memorial. In the parody, amalgamation took the place of colonization and, thus,

free blacks took the place of the white colonizationists. The societal order was turned on its head. Instead of the white "self-styled benefactors" of the colonization society, there were "enlightened benefactors of the African race" who "would not feel themselves degraded by intermarriages with whites." Agency shifted to the "African race," which, within the framework of the amalgamation solution, had the social standing to define what was beneath them. There was a novelty, and some dissonance, in a free black man inferring that some might see his marriage to a white woman as beneath him. The free people of colour assured its readers that free black men would not discriminate against white women. Such a reversal was not unusual within the African American rhetorical tradition, which had a history of "chiastic fantasies of reversal of power relationships."[59]

Within the Anglo American rhetorical tradition, however, the free people of colour spurned the norms of public argument as amalgamation was brought into public deliberations. James Callender, a white man, had done the same in his articles about Jefferson and Hemings in the early 1800s. Yet, despite the fact that many found Callender's claims truthful, he was chastised for his lack of grace and modesty.[60] But the Counter Memorial was in the voice of free people of color and *advocated*, rather than reported, the mixing of the races. The free people of colour not only unmasked amalgamation in a public forum, but it transposed traditional notions of power in interracial relationships.

At this moment, the discourse concerning slavery provided two frameworks through which a white reader could interpret the public assertion of black agency. One framework was informed by the practice of blacks asserting agency using traditional

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[59] Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 59.

[60] Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood*, 51.

argumentative means (dialectic, "rational," and employing the language of elite whites) and media (petitions, memorials, pamphlets, and letters to newspapers). The other framework for interpreting the assertion of black agency was the discourse of slave insurrections. Arguing for amalgamation vacillated between these two frameworks. Amalgamation was presented as a "natural, easy and efficacious" (read: reasonable) response to the problem; yet, the suggestion of mixing blood implicated anxieties underlying the security discourse. Lacking a stable interpretive framework left questions as to the appropriate response to the Counter Memorial.

The two voices of Signifyin(g) were used by the free people of colour to destabilize the moderate rhetoric of colonization. Through the trope of the Talking Book, the presence of the black perspective challenged the white-dominated approach of colonizationists while also transgressing of the norms of white-dominated public discourse in general. The dialectic arguments advanced by the free people of colour (before the mention of amalgamation) seemed to conform to the argumentative norms of whites, a quality that gave their claims against colonizationists' credibility. In addition to challenging colonizationists explicitly, the second voice of Signifyin(g) subverted and mocked the norms of elite whites. These two voices—the serious and the subversive—created a message that spoke differently to members of different audiences.

Conclusion

The Counter Memorial could be reasonably interpreted within three different rhetorical traditions of the early nineteenth-century United States: dialectic, parodic, or Signifyin(g). The interpretation of the Counter Memorial within each tradition

compromised the rhetorical foundation of colonization efforts. Colonization rhetoric was also challenged by the potential uncertainty of interpretation. Not knowing the Counter Memorial's intended meaning could lead to a dismissal of the text, but it could also infuse uncertainty into the public discussion of colonization. What Clay and Caldwell had taken as self-evident propositions (e.g., the problem was color, the prejudice was unconquerable, the solution was obvious), the Counter Memorial contested. That the Counter Memorial could be understood as a critique of colonizationists from the perspective of blacks or whites suggests that the moderate rhetoric lacked identification with either group.

The uncertainty and instability of the Counter Memorial emanated most clearly from the suggestion of racial amalgamation. The amalgamation solution encapsulated the variety of forces working against colonization that the colonization meeting discourse failed to address. In the parodic sense, the Counter Memorial could be read as equating colonization with amalgamation for the purpose of demonstrating the former's ridiculousness. Delving deeper, amalgamation was a source of intense anxiety. Amalgamation represented the public objections (of whites) to mixing blood lines and it represented the private reality that this was already occurring. Fear of amalgamation was premised on a clear racial hierarchy, yet the reality of biracial children challenged the chromological ease with which this hierarchy could be asserted. The ease with which amalgamation was discussed in the Counter Memorial suggested that interracial sex was the norm. If so, then whites and blacks were far more connected than colonizationists had (or wanted to) believe. The logic of colonization depended upon the ease of the project: Simply move free blacks and the problems of slavery will disappear. The complex of

meanings bound up in amalgamation suggested that the United States was beyond the point where such a simple suggestion was plausible. The races and classes in the United States were interconnected in ways that many whites would not admit or discuss publicly.[61]

Interestingly, the Counter Memorial did not garner much attention or response. The basic arguments set forth in the Counter Memorial were echoed in the "Resolutions and Remonstrances" that were printed after an anti-colonization meeting of black Philadelphians on January 15, 1817. However, neither the Counter Memorial nor its memorialists were mentioned. Even more, the "Resolutions and Remonstrances" did not adopt the argument for amalgamation or the more figurative dimensions of Signifyin(g). In Part II of William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization*, the "Sentiments of the People of Color" were offered. In his introduction, Garrison asserted, "The first public demonstration of hostility to the colonization scheme was made in 1817, by the free colored inhabitants of Richmond, Virginia."[62] There was no mention or reproduction of the Counter Memorial in the seventy-six pages concerning the sentiments of free blacks. The duality, nuance, and figuration may explain its omission, as many free black communities and abolitionists moved to address colonization head-on.

Moreover, the Counter Memorial did not garner the same level of attention as the proceedings of the colonization meeting. Free black communities took up the mantle of

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[61] In January of 1817, a "meeting of the People of Colour" at Bethel Church in Philadelphia produced and published a series of "Resolutions and Remonstrances" against the efforts of colonizationists in the District of Columbia. One resolution stated, "*Resolved*, That we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrongs; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them, than fancied advantages for a season." *Resolutions and Remonstrances of the People of Colour Against Colonization on the Coast of Africa*, (Philadelphia: n.p., 1818), [3].

[62] William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*. 2 parts. (1832; repr. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968), II: 8.

anti-colonization and used many of the same arguments advanced in the Counter Memorial. Colonizationists continued to advance the same claims made at the meeting. In a sense, the lack of attention to the Counter Memorial represented the ultimate problem with the colonizationists' rhetoric: a failure to confront the dominant rhetorical tensions of the time. Colonizationist discourse did make pre-emptive arguments concerning cost, feasibility, and the willingness of free blacks to participate. But the colonizationists did not engage those whom they sought to colonize and Society failed to move beyond the basic rhetorical foundation set forth at the meeting. Rhetorician Stephen H. Browne argues that Garrison's *Thoughts* enacted a radical critique of colonization "whereby the language of accommodation is literally and symbolically talked off the stage of public reform by a dramatic reassertion of evangelical wrath."[63] Well before Garrison supported, then decried, the colonization movement, the Counter Memorial enacted a less well-known, less fiery, yet equally appreciable critique of colonization. Where Garrison and others are noted for the singularity and force of their expression against colonization, the Counter Memorial should be noted for its double-voicedness. If we appreciate the duality of the text and suspend the desire to select one meaning of the text, one can see how the Counter Memorial attacked the moderate rhetoric of colonization from both sides. That is, the moderation of colonizationists' attempts to float in the middle, between transcendent aims and practical purpose and between helping free blacks and helping whites. The attack levied by the Counter Memorial outflanked the colonizationists' moderate rhetoric.

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[63] Stephen H. Browne, "Textual Style and Radical Critique in William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization*. *Communication Studies* 47 (1996): 177.

PART IV:

THE LEGACY OF AFRICAN COLONIZATION IN AMERICA

AFTERWARD

TRACING THE IMPACT OF THE COLONIZATION MEETING

The colonization meeting of December 21, 1816, was a historic moment for the discourse of slavery in the United States. Prior to this moment, security and morality discourses of slavery were antagonistic to one another. The security-morality tension intensified the problem of slavery in American life. Yet, the potential to bring together differing rhetorical positions was available in the political economic discourse of the time. In response to the complexity of slavery in its historical moment, the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States motivated their project with moderate rhetorical strategies. By using moderate rhetoric to advance the cause of colonization, advocates had access to rhetorical resources that could potentially resolve the tensions in slavery discourse. However, colonizationists, most notably Henry Clay and Elias Caldwell, failed to tap into the transcendent possibilities of moderate rhetoric. This failure was immediately exposed by the Counter Memorial of the Free People of Colour of the District of Columbia. Thus, even before the colonizationists had the opportunity to submit its Memorial to Congress or begin to raise funds, the weaknesses of its moderate rhetorical foundation had been exposed. Yet, one might ask, what was the impact of the moderate rhetoric of colonization beyond the colonization meeting?

To round out the story of the Colonization Society, it seems that this question is best answered in two ways. The first is to explore the pragmatic impact of the colonization meeting (and the Colonization Society) on slavery in the United States. The

pragmatic answer will provide the reader with a brief account of what happened to the colonization society after this meeting. Did it accomplish its goals? How many free blacks were colonized? Did it receive federal funds? Such details will help show the importance of the first meeting to the overall movement. With many of the empirical and historical questions about colonization explored, this discussion turns to a second answer to the question of impact. Here, the emphasis is placed upon the *rhetorical* impact of the colonization meeting. Rhetorical impact can be discerned by observing how symbols from a given moment are repeated or develop over time.[1] What role did colonization play in the public discourse of slavery? Were the symbols used by colonizationists repeated across time? How did the moderate rhetoric of colonization develop and adapt over time? Questions such as these are addressed by looking forward from the meeting and tracing the symbols used by colonizationists. Ultimately, both the pragmatic and rhetorical explorations of impact arrive at the same conclusion: the moderate rhetoric of colonizationists failed to overcome the tensions of slavery and did not motivate colonization as a viable solution to the problem of slavery.

The Pragmatic Impact of the Colonization Meeting

One implication of the speeches of Henry Clay and Elias Caldwell was the articulation of the goals that a national colonization organization would attempt to achieve. Unlike previous efforts at colonization, the newest venture had the explicit goal to gain federal support for colonization. More generally, the colonization society shared with previous efforts the common goals of alleviating the tensions caused by slavery.

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[1] Ernest G. Bormann referred to this as "chaining out." See Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," *Quarterly Journals of Speech* 58 (1972): 396-407.

From a practical perspective, then, it seems appropriate to assess the degree to which the colonization society met its stated goals.

Aside from the meeting, the first step to achieving federal support for colonization was to communicate to Congress the colonization vision. The movement for federal support officially began with the delivery of a Memorial to Congress on January 14, 1817. The Memorial, signed by Society President, Bushrod Washington, continued to use the same appeals that Caldwell and Clay used in their speeches at the germinal meetings. The Memorial's description of the problem of slavery (i.e., the presence of free blacks within the United States) framed the issue in political terms, stating, "The intermediate species of population [free blacks] cannot be incorporated so as to render the Body Politic homogeneous and consistent in all its [members] which must be [the] essential consideration of every form of government."[2] The Colonization Society made initial headway in 1819, when colonization sympathizer President James Monroe sent a naval officer to West Africa to negotiate the purchase of land for a colony where "recaptured Africans" could be located.[3] The colony was named Liberia, to signify the liberty given to free blacks from the United States. In honor of his support, the capital of Liberia was named Monrovia.

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[2] The Memorial was printed in *National Intelligencer*, January 18, 1817; and in *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cog., 2nd sess., January 14, 1817, 481-83.

[3] In 1819, Charles Fenton Mercer, a leading proponent of African colonization from Virginia, authored a Slave Trade Act, authorizing the federal government to transport illegally-smuggled slaves back to Africa. Mercer and other colonizationists argued to President Monroe that the law not only authorized transportation back to Africa, it also authorized the president to purchase land for a colony. Monroe, a colonization sympathizer from his years as governor of Virginia, accepted such an interpretation and sent U.S. naval officer Robert Stockton to present-day Liberia to negotiate for land. See P. J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 34, 50-56, 63-66.

The purchase of the colony did not end colonizationists' request for government funds. For instance, in 1827, the ACS asked for more federal subsidies and Virginia Representative Charles Fenton Mercer submitted a bill for support of colonization in 1830.[4] The ACS was gaining enemies in Congress, most notably (and vociferously) from the Lower South. The continued pursuit of federal support by colonizationists—and the responses it drew from opponents—led the Jackson administration to halt payments to the ACS in the fall of 1830. Colonizationists would continue to petition Congress for financial support, however, the days of federally-funded African colonization were all but over. From 1830 onward, the ACS relied upon the fundraising efforts of its state-based auxiliary societies and private funding for its efforts.[5]

Colonization not only received a lukewarm response from Congress, but eventually from willing colonists as well. In the Northern states, the free black community numbered nearly 100,000 in 1820. Yet, from 1820 to 1830, only one hundred and fifty-four black Northerners emigrated to Liberia.[6] In the South, free blacks seemed more willing to embrace colonization, with seven-hundred and twenty men, women, and children departing for Liberia in the 1820s.[7] Manumissions were similarly small. Six freedpersons were transported to Liberia between 1820 and 1825. The numbers increased

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[4] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 170-175.

[5] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 170-175; Douglas R. Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer and the Trial of National Conservatism* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1985), 239-40; and Douglas R. Egerton, "Averting a Crisis: The Proslavery Critique of the American Colonization Society," *Civil War History* 43 (1997): 142-56. It is also worth noting that in 1831, the state society in Maryland broke from the ACS and created its own colony. Maryland in Liberia (as the society was called) operated from 1831 until 1852, when the colony gained independence. See Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831-1857* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

[6] Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 16.

[7] Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 16.

over the next five years, with four-hundred seventy nine bondspersons being freed and transported to Liberia by 1830.[8] From 1817 to 1899, the ACS colonized 15, 386 free blacks to Liberia and raised $2,762,467.87 from private donors.[9] The quantitatively insignificant efforts of the ACS became evident to many—like Alexis de Tocqueville, who pointed out that 2,500 free blacks were sent to Liberia in the first twelve years the Society's efforts, but that the black population in the South had increased by 700,000 during that same time.[10] Even still, slaveholders throughout the Upper South—most notably in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee—continued to inquire about emancipating slaves for the purpose of their removal to Liberia.

The colony (and later, republic) of Liberia played an ironic role in the overall story of the Colonization Society. For most colonizationists, Liberia represented the end of their work. Once free blacks were removed, the United States would become the thriving, safe, and productive republic that colonizationists thought it could be. Yet in the long term, Liberia represents the most lasting legacy of the Colonization Society. The formation of Liberia was inauspicious. The first colonists sponsored by the Society arrived at Sherbro Island in 1821, but suffered such great hardships that they moved the next year to Cape Mesurado, on the coast of mainland Liberia. With subsequent voyages, colonists struggled with disease and famine on land and on shore. Health concerns were not the only struggles for colonists. The relationship between the Colonization Society and its colonists was also tenuous. So too was the relationship between the colonists and

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[8] Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 17.

[9] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, Appendix I, 251.

[10] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 2 parts. (New York: Everyman's Library, 1994), I: 377-78; and Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed., *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), xviii.

the native tribes.[11] Liberia gained its independence from the United States in July of 1847, but, as colonization literature reported, "The tastes, and customs, and sympathies of the people are eminently American."[12] For example, Liberians wrote their own Declaration of Independence and Constitution. They established a legislature with a House of Representatives and a Senate. Moreover, they were led by a president and a vice-president.

Unfortunately, aspects of cultural dominance also made the passage from the United States to Liberia. The Colonial Governor of Liberia reported in 1836, that "the marriage of a colonist with any one of the neighboring tribes was considered exceedingly disreputable, and subjected the individual to the contempt of his fellow citizens."[13] At least one colonist openly maintained that the native Africans ought to be slaves to the colonists.[14] Even after Liberian independence was achieved, the fissure remained. In May of 1879, Liberia's vice-president, Daniel B. Warner, urged intermarriage as a way to breach the divide between settlers and natives. However, Warner recognized that "it would require on the part of the man of the least culture, strong moral courage to break through the strong prejudice against the intermarriage of the colonists and natives which prevails here among Americo-Liberians."[15]

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[11] For first hand accounts of these tensions, see Bell Irvin Wiley, ed. *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980). For a description of the relationship between the colonists and native tribes, see M. B. Akpan, "Black Imperialism: Americo-Liberia Rule over the African Peoples of Liberia, 1841-1964," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7 (1973): 217-36.

[12] "The New Nationality," *African Repository*, October 1862, 295. See also Amos J. Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), xi.

[13] Joseph J. Roberts, "Annual Message," *African Repository*, April 1851, 117.

[14] Archibald Alexander, *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 511.

The attitude persists even today. Helene Cooper, a Liberian by birth, writes in an April 6, 2008, *New York Times Magazine* article, "In Liberia, we are called the Congo People—my family and the rest of the freed American blacks who founded Liberia back in 1821. It is a somewhat derogatory term, used by the native Liberians. . . We got the native Liberians back by calling them Country People—far more derogatory, in our eyes."[16] Although thousands of miles from U.S. shores, and well beyond the consciousness of most Americans, then and now, Liberia has much in common with its paternal colonizer.

Liberian independence did not end support for colonization in U.S. political discourse. It should not be surprising that Abraham Lincoln supported colonization. Lincoln's political hero was Henry Clay, a man whom the future president admired for his moderation. In his eulogy of Clay, Lincoln opined,

> If, as the friends of colonization hope, the present and coming generations of our countrymen shall by any means succeed in freeing our land from the dangerous presence of slavery, and at the same time in restoring a captive people to their long lost fatherland with bright prospects for the future, and this too so *gradually* that neither races nor individuals shall have suffered by the change, it will indeed be a glorious consummation.[17]

Like Clay, Lincoln argued that colonization was a moderate solution to the rising tensions caused by slavery. Lincoln articulated his support for colonization in his Springfield

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[15] Daniel B. Warner to William Coppinger, May 24, 1879, quoted in Akpan, "Black Imperialism," 225.

[16] Helene Cooper, "In Search of a Lost Africa," *New York Times Magazine*, April 6, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com (accessed April 7, 2008).

[17] Abraham Lincoln, "Eulogy of Henry Clay," in John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Volume II* (New York: Francis D. Tandy Company, 1894), 177 (emphasis added).

speech during the 1857 Illinois senatorial debates. In that speech, Lincoln observed that "the separation of the races in the only perfect preventative of amalgamation. . . . Such separation, if ever effected at all, must be effected by colonization."[18] Once president, Lincoln continued to advocate colonization as a remedy to the problems of slavery. Lincoln featured colonization in his annual messages to Congress in December of 1861 and again in December, 1862.[19] In between these two messages, Lincoln invited free blacks to the White House to discuss the virtues of colonization, after which he delivered an address on colonization.[20] Lincoln has been canonized as the "Great Emancipator," yet in the month before he signed the Emancipation Proclamation the president was still supporting colonization—and not emancipation—as the solution to the problems of slavery.

Even with the support of colonization from Lincoln, the U.S. Civil War complicated and compromised the efforts of colonizationists. The confusion of wartime and the failure of Lincoln's efforts in the Caribbean hampered any colonization efforts.[21] Colonization was further impacted by the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, which granted citizenship to all freedmen. The most significant reason to leave the United States for Liberia or the Caribbean was to gain freedom. After the Reconstruction Amendments passed, that impetus was void. The Colonization Society attempted to

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[18] Abraham Lincoln, "Springfield Speech," in *Complete Works*, 337.

[19] Abraham Lincoln, "Annual Message, 1861," in *Life and Works of Abraham Lincoln*. Marion Mills Miller, ed. 9 vols. (New York: Current Literature Publishing Co., 1907), VI: 43; Lincoln, "Annual Message, 1862," in *Life and Works*, VI: 54-55.

[20] See James D. Lockett, "Abraham Lincoln and Colonization: An Episode that Ends in Tragedy at L'Ile a Vache, Haiti, 1863-1864," *Journal of Black Studies* 21 (1991): 428-444; Paul J. Scheips, "Lincoln and the Chiriqui Project," *Journal of Negro History* 37 (1952): 418-453; and Charles H. Wesley, "Lincoln's Plan for Colonizing the Emancipated Negroes," *Journal of Negro History* 4 (1919): 7-21.

[21] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 247-48.

secure government funds once more, in 1867, asking Representative Thaddeus Stevens (R-PA) to include $50,000 in an appropriation bill to aid in the emigration of African Americans to Liberia. Congress refused the request and ridiculed the society.[22]

After 1865, the Colonization Society withered away. The *raison d'être* of the Society—the peculiarly situated free black in a slave society—was gone. Those who maintained connections to the Colonization Society turned their focus on the success of the Liberian nation and African civilization. By 1909, five surviving members bequeathed the records of the Society to the Library of Congress. The organization formally disbanded in 1965.

Although the Colonization Society faded from political relevance, the concept of African Americans relocating to Africa did not disappear. Colonization was refashioned in the 1910s and 1920s with the Back to Africa movement of Jamaican emigrant Marcus Garvey. Garvey was the charismatic leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and advocated that blacks everywhere work to reclaim Africa from European colonizers. Garveyism, as it was sometimes called, was most prominent in the United States from approximately 1914 to 1927, but had an international resonance beyond this period. Garveyism was different than colonization because, at its core, it professed African empowerment. The movement was not led by white people telling the blacks where to go, it was led by blacks telling the whites where to go. Despite the message of empowerment, Garvey's emigration plans suffered from many of the same critiques that the moderate rhetoric of colonization had seen. Prominent intellectual and African American historian W. E. B. Du Bois stated, "Marcus Garvey is, without doubt, the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America and in the world. He is either a lunatic or

[22] Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 248.

a traitor."[23] Du Bois saw Garveyism as a movement that legitimized racism and discrimination through the same means as had previously been attempted: segregation. In a move that would only confirm Du Bois's critique, Garvey's American supporters—under the name of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia—worked with white supremacists to federally fund the "repatriation" of African Americans. This effort, undertaken in 1937, was called the Greater Liberia Act and was introduced by Senator Theodore Bilbo (D-MS). The act aimed to federally fund the removal of twelve million African Americans to help solve the nation's unemployment issues of the time. From the period spanning World War I to World War II, colonization was part of the American discourse on race relations in the United States. Whether the movement was termed emigration, Back to Africa, Garveyism, or repatriation, the relationship between the United States, Africa, and the peoples of both continents continued to be complicated.

In practical terms, the Colonization Society did receive federal support, though never at the level it desired and certainly not enough to significantly impact the institution of slavery. Furthermore, the governmental support that was received did not help quell the tensions of slavery nor lead to the development of a flourishing republic in West Africa. Nonetheless, the idea of colonization continued to circulate in U.S. politics.

The Rhetorical Impact of the Colonization Meeting

If one judges the Colonization Society by its success in gaining federal support and ending the problems of slavery, it would not be difficult to reach definitive conclusion. However, as Marie Tyler-McGraw argues, "A political interpretation of the

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[23] W. E. B Du Bois, "A Lunatic or a Traitor," *The Crisis*, May 1924, 8-9, repr. in *The Emerging Thought of W. E. B. Du Bois*: *Essays and Editorials from* The Crisis *with an Introduction, Commentaries, and a Person Memoir*, Henry Lee Moon, ed. (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1972), 325.

Colonization Society inadequately describes its quixotic appeal, its rhetoric, or its local level of persistence."[24] The use of moderate rhetoric explains both the longevity of the movement and its enduring failure to transcend the problems of slavery. The initial failures of colonization's moderate rhetoric were detailed in Chapters Three, Four, and Five of this project. Here, a broader assessment of the colonization meeting's rhetorical impact is considered. The persistence of colonization beyond the meeting can be understood in terms of three rhetorical legacies that emanated from this event: the legacy of the meeting, the legacy of moderation, and the legacy of critique.

Legacy of the Meeting and Nostalgia

Casting its gaze upon the nation's legislators—and the national purse—the Colonization Society organizers sought out well-regarded men to advance their cause. Recruiting Bushrod Washington, Henry Clay, and Elias B. Caldwell to speak at the meeting signaled that name and celebrity of character were important aspects of the Colonization Society's efforts. Attracting high-profile support for colonization remained part of the Colonization Society's efforts; still, the men who were a part of the Society's founding held a special place in the discourse surrounding colonization. The "Founders of this Institution" were associated with "wisdom, patriotism and philanthropy" and "operated for in all directions, and without assignable limit."[25] Founders were described as "eminent" men who "clearly foresaw the vast extent of good" in colonization.[26]

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[24] Marie Tyler-McGraw, "The Hues and Uses of Liberia," in *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates, and Carl Pedersen, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193.

[25] "General Walter Jones: The Last of the Founders of the American Colonization Society," *African Repository*, November 1861, 321.

Colonization Society literature praised the "Fathers of the American Colonization Society" for creating a scheme that "like the air and light of Heaven" would benefit all humans by its existence.[27] Even after Liberia declared its independence and the Colonization Society dwindled in support, praise of the founders continued. Credit for the sovereign Liberian state was connected to the Society's founders, with one article stating, "In the organization and progress of the American Colonization Society, to which Liberia owes its origin and existence, many of the most illustrious of our public men have given the benefit of their wise counsel and powerful support."[28] Thus, the founders' ethos provided both immediate and long-term appeal for colonizationists.

Much like Washington, Jefferson, and Madison were heralded as founding fathers of the U.S. republic, Clay, Caldwell, Bushrod Washington, Rev. Robert Finley, Charles Fenton Mercer, and others were canonized in pro-colonization literature.[29] In 1825, a "concise history" of the not-yet-decade-old Colonization Society was offered in its literary organ, *African Repository and Colonial Journal*. In that account, Finley was portrayed as the initiator of the Colonization Society, having "aroused the whole vigour of his intellect, to form plans for their relief."[30] In the Eleventh Annual Report of the Colonization Society, the history of meeting preceded the familiar arguments about practicability and effects of colonization. The report praised Finley and Caldwell as

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[26] "Africa[:] The Great Movements," *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, May 1842, 129.

[27] "Colonization Benevolence: Message of the President," *African Repository*, April 1862, 103.

[28] "The United States Government and Liberia," *African Repository*, January 1876, 4.

[29] In later writings, others were also added to the list of colonization's founding fathers. Most notable were Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, and Abraham Lincoln. See "The United States Government and Liberia," *African Repository*, January 1876, 5.

[30] "American Colonization Society," *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, March 1825, A1-A2.

progenitors of the meeting and mentioned Clay and Washington by name as well.[31] The Fifteenth Annual Report of the Colonization Society expanded the paternity of colonization beyond Finley (though he was effusively praised), implicating Thomas Jefferson, Ferdinando Fairfax (a wealthy Virginian landowner), Granville Sharp (an antislavery advocate in Great Britain), and Chief Justice John Marshall as founders.[32] Later articles described Mercer as "The American Wilberforce"—a reference to the well-known British anti-slavery advocate.[33] The men (and they were all men) that were praised as founders afforded the Colonization Society with political, social, and moral authority. Such rehearsals of reverence grounded the society in a rich tradition of U.S. statesmen. From such a strong foundation, created by their eminent founders, colonizationists continued to argue the benefits of colonization.

Although praising the founders offered the Colonization Society a degree of authority, such reverence also worked in opposition to the group's scheme. Praise of the founders looked backward and not forward, which constrained a movement that still had not achieved its goal of widespread colonization. Instead of motivating future action, the repeated praise of the founders was nostalgic, or "a yearning for yesterday."[34] As Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles note, "Nostalgic appeals are . . . structurally

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[31] "Eleventh Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States, with Appendices," reprinted in *The American Quarterly Review*, December, 1828, 397-398.

[32] "Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society," reprinted in *North American Review*, July 1832, 118-38.

[33] "General Mercer and Colonization," *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, November 1833, 265. See also "Africa. The Great Movements," 132. In the late-1850s, there were a number of articles written that attempted to elevate Mercer to the status of *the* father of the colonization movement. See "Hon. C. F. Mercer: Suppression of the African Slave Trade," *African Repository*, September 1856, 271; and "The Late General Charles Fenton Mercer," *African Repository*, June 1858, 161-73; and "Honor to Whom Honor is Due," *African Repository*, December 1860, 367.

[34] Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

conservative," as "the rhetor invites the audience to validate the past in opposition to a vision for the progressive future."[35] The conservatism of the Colonization Society's nostalgia served as an extension of their failed moderate rhetoric. Focusing on the strong character and elevated intellect of the founders was consistent with the rhetorical practices at the colonization meeting, and in both cases the focus on character was not enough to address the security-morality tension in slavery discourse. Praising the founders gave the Colonization Society historical significance, but it did not give the project legitimacy in the present or future.

Legacy of Moderation and Benevolence

The speeches of Clay and Caldwell at the colonization meeting began the process of reducing moderate rhetoric to the affection of benevolence. The reduction of colonization to benevolence was perpetuated in the Memorial to Congress of the Colonization Society from January 14, 1817, where Southern (slaveholding) supporters of colonization were described as "benevolent or conscientious proprietors."[36] The same characterization was conveyed twenty years later in the *Commercial Herald and Pennsylvania Herald*, where the Colonization Society was described as "originated by benevolent and pious citizens of the south, and joined by citizens of the north."[37] Blending the nostalgia for founders and the focus on benevolence, one writer proclaimed, "These great men [Colonization Society founders] saw the comprehensive benevolence

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[35] Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, "Collective Memory, Political Nostalgia, and the Rhetorical Presidency: Bill Clinton's Commemoration of the March on Washington, August 28, 1998," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86 (2000): 428.

[36] "Memorial to Congress," *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 2nd sess., January 14, 1817, 482.

[37] *Commercial Herald, and Pennsylvania Herald*, repr. in *Maryland Colonization Journal*, March 12, 1838, 64.

of the scheme they proposed."[38] Subsequent reports from the Colonization Society continued to emphasize the benevolent motivation of colonizationists. In the Eleventh Annual Report of the Society, colonization to Africa was justified because "if ever the vast continent is to experience the blessings of civilization, it must be through the medium of foreign benevolence."[39] Another correspondent to the *African Repository* wrote of Liberia, "Let her have our help, and our great debt to Africa is paid by our benevolence."[40] Harkening to Clay's reference to the "great moral debt" owed to Africa, benevolence was given tremendous power as it was benevolence, not freedom, liberty, or justice that would settle the United States' debt to blacks.[41] By describing colonization and its supporters as benevolent, rhetors attempted to establish the motivations for colonization as beyond reproach.

Yet, benevolence was a complicated concept, which created the potential to criticize the supposedly-noble motivations of colonizationists. In one criticism of colonizationists' benevolence, rhetors accepted benevolence as the guiding principle but noted that emancipation was a better means of enacting benevolence. A committee of free blacks in Wilmington, Delaware, drafted an address stating, "But we beg leave most respectfully to ask the friends of African colonization, whether their Christian benevolence cannot in the country be equally as advantageously applied, if they are

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[38] Coxe, "General Walter Jones," 321.

[39] "Eleventh Annual Report," 425.

[40] "The New Nationality," 300.

[41] Appendix I, 29-30.

actuated by that disinterested spirit of love and friendship for us, which they profess?"[42] Virginian Edmund Ruffin charged, "These counselors could act with similar facilities and success in inciting as a pious work the testamentary emancipation of the slaves." Emancipation was "unquestionably benevolent and pious," while many slaveholding supporters of colonization "had indicated anything but piety, benevolence, or a delicate sense of propriety."[43] Simply because colonizationists claimed their scheme to be benevolent, did not make it so, nor was colonization the *most* benevolent option.

In *Thoughts on African Colonization*, William Lloyd Garrison tactfully and carefully unpacked the meaning of benevolence in relation to colonization, demonstrating that a claim of benevolence was not a justifiable motivation. Of colonizationists, Garrison "concede[d] to them benevolence of purpose and expansiveness of heart," but goes on to state,

> I blame them, nevertheless, for taking this mighty scheme upon trust; for not perceiving and rejecting the monstrous doctrines avowed by the master spirits in the crusade; and for feeling so indifferent to the moral, political and social advancement of the free people of color in this their only legitimate home.[44]

Garrison's critique appreciated that colonizationists were attempting to do good, but he was also quite clear in asserting that colonizationists' perception of "good" was morally flawed. Three years after Garrison's *Thoughts* was published, William Jay similarly

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[42] Abraham D. Shad, Peter Spencer, W[illia]m S. Thomas, "Address of the Free People of Color of the Borough of Wilmington, Delaware," (1831), repr. in William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*. 2 parts (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), II: 38.

[43] Edmund Ruffin, "African Colonization Unveiled" (1833), repr. in *Address to the Virginia State Agricultural Society* (Richmond: P. D. Bernard, 1853), 8.

[44] Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*, I: 2.

isolated the claims of colonization as a "benevolent system" and refuted the system as a self-interested scheme of slaveholders.[45]

The concept of benevolence became a significant point of contention between colonizationists and anti-colonizationists. Although supporters used the term for its (supposedly) self-evident implications of morality, opponents of colonization discussed the term as a mask for self-interested and immoral actions against free blacks. Recalling Adam Smith's discussion of the impartial spectator, the impartial spectator adjudicates the morality of an action by considering how a person divested of interest would judge the action. This sense of disinterestedness gave moderate rhetoric its grounding and authority. By connecting benevolence to self-interest, anti-colonization advocates challenged the moderate rhetorical impact of benevolence. Once associated with self-interested slaveholders, colonization shifted toward one side of the security-morality tension in slavery discourse (namely, the security side). Thus, the critique of colonizationists' benevolence as being concerned with the security of slaveholders stripped benevolence, and the Colonization Society, of its standing as a moderate rhetorical approach to the tensions in slavery discourse.

Legacy of Critique and Radicalism

The moderate rhetoric of colonizationists did not overcome the discursive tensions in slavery. To the contrary, the moderate rhetoric of colonization became a catalyst for the abolitionist movement and radical opposition to slavery. The Counter Memorial of the Free People of Colour provided a glimpse into the variety of ways that

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[45] William Jay, *Slavery in America: Or, an Inquiry into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization and the American Anti-Slavery Societies* (London: F. Westley and A. H. Davis, 1835), 80-6.

colonization could be destabilized, by pro-slavery and anti-slavery advocates alike.[46] After the Counter Memorial, free black leaders Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, James Forten, and others led meetings of thousands of blacks in Philadelphia who unanimously opposed the Colonization Society.[47] Many responses to colonization refuted colonizationists through dialectical argument.[48]

Some of the most notable anti-slavery rhetors and discourses positioned colonization as a significant detriment to the cause of African American rights. Article Four of David Walker's *Appeal* was devoted entirely to the Colonization Society. Once a member of the Colonization Society, Garrison devoted considerable attention to denouncing colonization in *Thoughts* and in his newspaper, *The Liberator*.[49] Maria Miller Stewart poetically ridiculed colonization thusly: "But ah, methinks their hearts are so frozen towards us, they had rather their money should be sunk in the ocean than to administer it to our relief."[50] In 1849, Frederick Douglass proclaimed, "the Colonization Society is one of the most impudent Societies in the world."[51] In moments when notable

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[46] *National Intelligencer*, December 30, 1816, n.p.

[47] A January 15, 1817, meeting in Philadelphia to discuss colonization recorded three thousand people in attendance. Forten, Jones, Allen, and others were generally in support of colonization, but they quickly learned that they were in the minority. A memorial was drafted in unanimous opposition to colonization. See Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 238.

[48] See Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*, Part II: The Sentiments of the People of Color.

[49] Garrison's critique caused well-known activists Elizur Wright Jr., Amos A. Phelps, and Theodore Dwight Weld to quit the ACS. Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 21.

[50] Maria W. Stewart, "An Address Delivered at the African Masonic Hall, Boston, February 27, 1833" repr. in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapansky, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 126.

[51] Frederick Douglass, "Colonizationist Measures: An Address Delivered in New York, New York, On 24 April 1849," in *The Frederick Douglass Papers*. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Vol. 2, John W. Blassingame, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 163. Douglass delivered other addresses against colonization, see Douglass, "The Colonizationist Revival: An Address Delivered in

African Americans supported colonization, as was the case with Henry Highland Garnet, abolitionists responded negatively.[52]

Finally, much in the same way the Counter Memorial played with ridicule, abolitionist rhetors responded to colonization with humor and ridicule. Douglass delivered numerous speeches in which he illuminated the anti-black motivation of colonizationists through irony. For example, in an 1849 speech in New York, Douglass opened by stating:

> Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: The resolution which I have been called upon to second is an appeal to the people of Great Britain from us, not to unite with our enemies against us, but to set their faces against our enemies and thereby help us. I shall return to this resolution after I have said a few things in favour of Colonization and against ourselves.[53]

Douglass went on to discuss the motivations of colonizationists and the good they claimed to be doing. At the conclusion of this description, he stated, "Now are we not an ungrateful class of people?" which received laughter from the audience.[54] Colonization provided abolitionists not only with a serious movement to rebut, but with a host of unstable arguments that could be ridiculed and, thus, further destabilized.

Conclusion

Boston, Massachusetts, on 31 May 1849;" and Douglass, "Henry Clay and Colonization Cant, Sophistry, and Falsehood: An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, On 2 February 1851" in *The Frederick Douglass Papers*. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Vol. 2, John W. Blassingame, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 203-217; and 311-325.

[52] Sterling Stuckey, *Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 116-17.

[53] Douglass, "Colonizationist Measures," 159.

[54] Douglass, "Colonizationist Measures," 159.

In sum, the moderate rhetoric that colonizationists expounded allowed the movement to persist, though without much success. The failed attempt at moderate rhetoric that defined the Colonization Society and that pervaded subsequent colonization discourses was roundly criticized. Thus, any potential that colonization had to overcome the discursive tensions of slavery was diminished from the Society's foundation. The practical and rhetorical impacts of the meeting profoundly illustrate this failure.

APPENDIX I:

EDITED EDITION OF THE COLONIZATION MEETING MINUTES, DECEMBER 21, 1816

An eclectic text comprised of reported minutes from the *National Intelligencer*, December 24, 1816 and the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, February 1836, 50-56.

The Meeting on the Colonization of Free Blacks

[REPORTED FOR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER]

At Davis's Hotel, Saturday, Dec. 21, 1816

Mr. HENRY CLAY, of Kentucky having been called to the Chair and Mr. THOMAS DOUGHERTY, of this District, having been appointed Secretary—

Mr. CLAY (on taking the chair) said that he had hoped to have seen called to the place, for which he had the honor of being selected, a gentleman* who, from his name[,] his exalted station, and his distinguished virtues, would have communicated an additional importance to the present meeting. But, as that gentleman was not present, Mr. C. regretted to learn, from causes beyond his control, he would with great pleasure endeavor to discharge the duties of the chair. He understood the object of the present meeting, to be to consider of the propriety and practicability of colonizing the free blacks of color of the United States and of forming an Association in relation to that object. That class, of the mixt population of our country, was peculiarly situated. They neither enjoyed the immunities of freemen, nor were they subject to the incapacities of slaves, but partook in some degree of the qualities of both. From their condition, and the unconquerable prejudices resulting from their color, they never could amalgamate with the free whites of this country. It was desirable, therefore, both as it respected them, and the residue of the population of the country, to drain them off. Various schemes of colonization had been thought of, and a part of our own continent, it was supposed by some, might furnish a suitable establishment for them. But, for his part, Mr. C. said, he had a decided preference for some part of the coast of Africa. There ample provision might be made for

the colony itself, and it might be rendered instrumental to the introduction, into that extensive quarter of the globe, of the arts, civilization and Christianity. There was a peculiar, a moral fitness in restoring them to the land of their fathers. And if, instead of the evils and sufferings which we had been the innocent cause of inflicting upon the inhabitants of Africa, we can transmit to her the blessings of our arts, our civilization and our religion, may we not hope that America will extinguish a great portion of that moral debt which she has contracted to that unfortunate continent? We should derive much encouragement in the prosecution of the object which had assembled us together, by the success which had attended the colony of Sierra Leone. That establishment had commenced about 20 or 25 years ago, under the patronage of private individuals in Great Britain. The basis of the population of the colony consisted of the fugitive slaves from the Southern states during the Revolutionary war, who had been first carried to Nova Scotia, and who afterwards, about the year 1792, upon their own application, almost in mass, had been transported to the western coast of Africa. This colony, after struggling with the most unheard of difficulties—difficulties resulting from the ignorance, barbarity and prejudices of the natives; from the climate (which were, however, found to be not at all insurmountable;—from wars, African as well as European; and such as are incidental to all new settlements) had made a gradual and steady progress, until it has acquired a strength and stability which promises to crown the efforts of its founders with complete success. We have their experience before us; and can there be a nobler cause than that which whilst it proposes to rid our own country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population, contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized

life and possible redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted quarter of the globe.

It was proper and necessary distinctly to state, that he understood it constituted no part of the object of this meeting to touch or agitate, in the slightest degree, a delicate question connected with another portion of the colored population of our country. It was not proposed to deliberate upon, or consider at all, any question of emancipation, or that was connected with the abolition of slavery. It was upon that condition alone, he was sure, that many gentlemen from the south and the west, whom he saw present, had attended, or could be expected to co-operate. It was upon that condition, only, that he had himself attended. He would only further add, that he hoped, in their deliberations, they would be guided by that moderation, politeness and deference for the opinion of each other, which were essential to any useful result. But when he looked around and saw the respectable assemblage, and recollected the humane and benevolent purpose which had produced it, he felt it unnecessary to insist farther on this topic.

Mr. ELIAS B. CALDWELL (of this district) then rose. He said he had hoped that the task of bringing forward the business of this day would have devolved on some person better qualified than himself for this purpose, and with greater claims to the public attention; and he felt peculiar embarrassment in obtruding himself upon the notice of so large and respectable a meeting, in which he found some of the most distinguished characters in our country. I bespeak (said he) your indulgence in offering to the consideration of the meeting, the resolutions which I hold in my hand, and to a few explanatory observations. The objects of the meeting have been feelingly and correctly stated by the honorable chairman. The subject seems to be divided into—

1st. The expediency; and 2dly, the practicability of the proposed plan. The expediency of colonizing the free people of colour in the United States, may be considered in reference to its influence on our civil institutions, on the morals and habits of the people, and on the future happiness of the free people of colour. It has been a subject of unceasing regret, and anxious solicitude, among many of our best patriots and wisest statesmen from the first establishment of our independence, that this class of people should remain, a monument of reproach, to those sacred principles of civil liberty, which constitute the foundation of all our constitutions. We say, in the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal," and have certain "inalienable rights." Yet, it is considered impossible, consistently with the safety of the state, and certainly is impossible, with the present feelings towards these people, that they can ever be placed upon this equality, or admitted to the enjoyment of these "inalienable rights," whilst they remain mixed with us. Some persons may declaim, and call it prejudice. No matter—prejudice is as powerful a motive, and will as certainly exclude them, as the soundest reason. Others may say, they are free enough. If this is a matter of opinion, let them judge—if of reason-let it be decided by our repeated and solemn declarations, in all our public acts. This state of society, unquestionably tends, in various ways to injure the morals and destroy the habits of industry among our people. This will be acknowledged by every person who has paid any attention to the subject; and it seems to be so generally admitted, that it would promote the happiness of the people, and the interest of the country, to get rid of this population, that it is unnecessary to dwell on this branch of the subject.

As to the Blacks, it is manifest that their interest and happiness would be promoted, by collecting them together where they would enjoy equal rights and privileges with those around them. A state of degradation is necessarily a state of unhappiness. It debases the mind; it cramps the energies of the soul, and represses every vigorous effort towards moral or intellectual greatness. How can you expect from them any thing great or noble, without the motives to stimulate or the rewards to crown great and noble achievements? It not only prevents their climbing the steep and rugged paths of fame, but it prevents the enjoyment of the true happiness of calm contentment, satisfied with enjoying but a part of what we possess, of using only a portion of what is in our power. Take away, however, the portion that is not used, and it immediately becomes the object of our fondest desires. The more you improve the condition of these people, the more you cultivate their minds, the more miserable you make them in their present state. You give them a higher relish for those privileges which they can never attain & turn what we intend for a blessing into a curse. No, if they must remain in their present situation, keep them in the lowest state of degradation and ignorance. The nearer you bring them to the condition of brutes, the better chance do you give them of possessing their apathy. Surely, Americans ought to be the last people on earth, to advocate such slavish doctrines, to cry peace and contentment to those who are deprived of the privileges of civil liberty. They who have so largely partaken the blessings—who know so well how to estimate its value, ought to be among the foremost to extend it to others.

I will consider the practicability of colonization under three heads: The territory—the expense—and the probability of obtaining their consent.

1. The territory—Various places have been mentioned by different persons: a situation within our own territory would certainly possess many advantages. It would be cheaper, and more immediately under the eye and control of out government. But there are some real and some apprehended evils to encounter. Many apprehend that they might hereafter join the Indians, or the nations bordering on our frontiers in case of war, if they were placed so near us - that the colony would become the asylum of fugitives and runaway slaves—added to these difficulties, there are inveterate prejudices against such a plan, in so large a portion of the country, which perhaps it would be impossible to overcome or remove. The North West Coast of the Pacific ocean, mentioned in the proceedings of the Virginia Legislature on this subject, appears to me, with great deference to that body, to be equally objectionable. The difficulty of procuring a territory there would be greater than in Africa; the climate is too cold for their constitutions; the transporting them more expensive, the route by water is much farther and of more difficult navigation—by land, in the present state of the intermediate country, long, hazardous, tedious and expensive. Upon mature reflection, with all the light that has yet been shed upon the subject, I believe it will be found that Africa will be liable to the fewest objections. The territory could be more easily procured there; the climate is best adapted to their constitutions, and they could live cheaper. But, Mr. Chairman, I have a greater and nobler object in view, in desireing them to be placed in Africa. It is the belief that through them civilization and the Christian religion would be introduced into that benighted quarter of the world. It is the hope of redeeming fifty millions of people from the lowest state of ignorance and superstition, and restoring them to the knowledge and worship of the true god. Great and powerful as are the other motives to this measure; and

I acknowledge them to be of sufficient magnitude to attract the attention and to call forth the united efforts of this nation, in my opinion, and you will find it the opinion of a large class of the community, all other motives are small and trifling compared with the hope of spreading among them a knowledge of the gospel. From the importance of this view of the subject, permit me to enlarge a little upon it. Whatever may be the difference of opinion among the different denominations of Christians, I believe they will all be found to unite in the belief that the scriptures predict a time, when the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be spread over every part of the world, shall be acknowledged by every nation, and perhaps shall influence every heart. The opinion is, perhaps, as general, that this glorious and happy day is near at hand. The great movements and mighty efforts in the moral and religious world, seem to indicate some great design of Providence on the eve of accomplishment. The unexampled and astonishing success attending the various and numerous plans which have been devised and which are now in operation in different parts of the world, and the union and harmony with which christians of different denominations unite in promoting these plans clearly indicate a Divine hand in their direction. Nay, sir, the subject on which we are now deliberating has been brought to public view, nearly about the same time in different parts of our country. In New Jersey, New York, Indiana, Tennessee, Virginia, and perhaps other places not know to me, the public attention seems to have been awakened, as from a slumber, to this subject. The belief that I have mentioned leads christians to look with anxious solicitude and joyful hope to every movement, which they believe to be instrumental in accomplishing the great designs of Providence. They will receive your proposal with joy and support it with zeal; and permit me to say, that it will be of no small consequence to gain the zealous

support and co-operation of this portion of the community. On the subject of the expence, I should hope there would not be much difference of opinion. All are interested, though some portions of the community are more immediately so than others. We should consider that what affects a part of our country is interesting to the whole. Besides, it is a great national object, & ought to be supported by the national purse. And, as has been justly observed by the honorable gentleman in the chair, there ought to be a national atonement for the wrongs and injuries which Africa has suffered. For although the state legislatures commenced early after our independence to put a stop to the slave trade and the national government interfered as soon as the constitution would permit, yet as a nation, we cannot rid ourselves entirely from the guilt and disgrace attending that iniquitous traffic until we, as a nation, have made every reparation in our power. If, however, more funds are wanting than it is thought expedient to appropriate out of the public treasury, the liberality and the humanity of our citizens will not suffer it to fail for want of pecuniary aid. I should be sorry, however, to see our government dividing any part of the honor and glory which cannot fail of attending the accomplishment of a work so great, so interesting, and which will tend so much to diffuse the blessings of civil liberty and the happiness of man.

Among the objections which have been made, I must confess that I am most surprized at one which seems to be prevalent, to wit: that these people will be unwilling to be colonized—What sir, are they not men? Will they not be actuated by the same motives of interests and ambition, which influence other men? Or will they prefer remaining in a hopeless state of degradation for themselves and their children, to the prospect of the full enjoyment of civil rights, and state of equality? What brought our

ancestors to these shores? They had no friendly hand to lead them; no powerful human arm to protect them. They left the land of their nativity; the sepulchers of their fathers; the comforts of civilized society, & all the endearments of friends and relatives, and early associations, to traverse the ocean; to clear the forests; to encounter all the hardships of a new settlement, and to brave the dangers of the tomahawk and scalping knife. How many were destroyed! sometimes whole settlements cut off by disease and hunger—by the treachery and cruelty of the savages; yet, they were not discouraged. What is it impels many Europeans daily to seek our shores, and to sell themselves for the prime of their life to defray the expence of their passages? It is that ruling, imperious desire planted in the breast of every man; the desire of liberty, of standing upon an equality with his fellow men. If we add to these motives, the offer of land, and to aid in the expence of emigration, and of first settling, they cannot be so blind to their own interest, so devoid of every noble and generous feeling, as to hesitate about accepting of the offer. It is not a matter speculation and opinion only. It has been satisfactorily ascertained, that numbers will gladly accept of the invitation. And when once the colony is formed, and flourishing, all other obstacles will be easily removed. It is for us to make the experiment and the offer—we shall then, and till then, have discharged our duty.

I feel, sir, that an apology is necessary for these crude observations. I feel how unworthy they are of the occasion, and of this assembly. With the utmost labor and the greatest preparation, I should fall far short of doing justice to the subject. I have not had it in my power to have these advantages on the present occasion. My humble endeavors have been directed rather to attract the attention of those to the subject, who would give it the aid of their talents, and the weight of their character, which it so justly merits than

from any efficient support which I could render. This meeting assures me that it will soon have that support, when my own deficiencies will be lost or forgotten, in the splendor with which genius and eloquence shall emblazon it. Permit me only further to remark that the object in view is a simple one. In the first instance, merely to make enquiry and procure information. The ultimate object which this association has in view, is peculiarly recommended by its steering clear of all those nice and delicate questions; of all those feelings, and interests and prejudices which are so intimately connected and interwoven with every question respecting the slaves, in which rights are violated. It is a plan in which all interests, all classes and descriptions of people may unite—in which all discordant feelings may be lost in those of humanity—in promoting "peace on earth and good will to men."

Mr. CALDWELL offered the following preamble and resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

The situation of the free people of color in the United States has been the subject of anxious solicitude, with many of our most distinguished citizens, from the first existence of our country as an independent nation; but the great difficulty and embarrassment attending the establishment of an infant nation, when first struggling into existence, and the subsequent convulsions of Europe, have hitherto prevented any great national effort to provide a remedy for the evils existing or apprehended. The present period seems peculiarly auspicious to invite attention to the important subject, and gives a well grounded hope of success. The nations of Europe are hushed into peace; unexampled efforts are making in various parts of the world, to diffuse knowledge, civilization and the benign influence of the Christian religion. The rights of man are becoming daily better

understood; the legitimate objects of government, as founded for the benefit, and intended for the happiness of men, are more generally acknowledged, and an ardent zeal for the happiness of the human race is kindled in almost every heart. Desirous of aiding in the great cause of philanthropy, and of promoting the prosperity and happiness of our country, it is recommended by this meeting to form an association or society, for the purpose of giving aid and assisting in the colonization of the free people of colour in the United States. Therefore—

Resolved, That an association or society, be formed for the purpose of collecting information, and to assist in the formation and execution of a plan for the colonization of the free people of colour, with their consent, in Africa or elsewhere, as may be thought most advisable, by the constituted authorities of the country.

Resolved, That *Elias B. Caldwell*, *John Randolph*, *Richard Rush*, *Walter Jones*, *Francis S. Key*, *Robert Wright*, *James H. Blake*, and *John Peter*, be a Committee to present a respectful memorial to Congress, requesting them to adopt such measures as may be thought most advisable for procuring a territory in Africa or elsewhere, suitable for the colonization of the free people of colour.

Resolved, That *Francis S. Key*, *Bushrod Washington*, *Elias B. Caldwell*, *James Breckenridge*, *Walter Jones*, *Richard Rush*, and *William G. D. Worthington*, be a Committee to prepare a Constitution and rules for the government of the Association or Society, above mentioned, and report the same to the next meeting for consideration.[1]

Mr. JOHN RANDOPLH (of Roanoke) rose and said, that it had been properly observed, by the chairman as well as by the gentleman from this district, that there was nothing in the proposition submitted to consideration which in the smallest degree

touches another very important and delicate question, which ought to be left as much out of view as possible. But, Mr. R. said, it appeared to him that it had not been sufficiently insisted on, with a view to obtain the co-operation of all the citizens of the United States, not only that this meeting does no in any wise affect the question of Negro slavery, but, as far as it goes, must materially tend to secure the property of every master in the United States in, to and over such slaves. It appeared to him that this aspect of the question had not been sufficiently presented to the public view. It was a notorious fact, he said, that the existence of this mixed and intermediate population of free Negroes was viewed by every slaves holder as one of the greatest sources of the insecurity, and also unprofitableness, of slave property; that they serve to excite in their fellow beings a feeling of discontent, of repining at their situation, and that they act as channels of communication not only between different slaves, but between the slaves of different districts; that they are the depositories of stolen goods, and the promoters of mischief. In a worldly sense of view, then, without entering into the general question, apart from those higher and nobler motives which had been well presented to the meeting, the owners of slaves were interested in throwing this population out of the bosom of the people. Mr. R. said he had made these remarks because the gentleman from the district had rather alluded to the possibility that this proceeding might create jealousy in the minds of slave holders. On the contrary, Mr. R. said, they above all other people were most interested in getting rid of this sort of population. As to the mode in which the object could be accomplished, he said he had not thought of it—He had not heard of this meeting until night; but he hoped measures would be taken to exonerate the country from what he considered not only as a disgrace, but as a grievous burthen. There was no fear, Mr. R. said, that this proposition

would alarm the slave holders; they had been accustomed to think seriously of the subject. There was popular work on agriculture, by John Taylor of Caroline, which was widely circulated and much confided in, in Virginia. In that book, much read because coming from a practical man, this description of people were pointed out as a great evil. They had indeed been held up as the great bug-bear to every man who feels an inclination to emancipate his slaves, not to create in the bosom of his country so great a nuisance. If a place could be provided for their reception, and a mode of sending them hence, there were hundreds, nay thousands of citizens, who would be manumitting their slaves, relieve themselves from the cares attendant on their possession. The great slave holder, Mr. R. said, was frequently a mere sentry at his own door—bound to stay on his own plantation to see that his slaves were properly treated. &c. Mr. R. concluded by saying that he had thought it necessary to make these remarks, being a slave holder himself, to shew that so far from being connected with abolition of slavery, the measure proposed would prove one of the greatest securities to enable the master to keep in possession of his own property.

Mr. ROBERT WRIGHT of Md Said he could not withhold his approbation of a measure, that had for its object the amelioration of the lot of any portion of the human race, particularly of the free people of colour, whose degraded state robs them of the happiness of self government, so dear to the American people. And said he, as I discover the most delicate regard to the rights of property, I shall with great pleasure lend my aid to restore this unfortunate people to the enjoyment of their liberty, but I fear gentleman are too sanguine in their expectations, that they would be willing to abandon the land of their nativity, so dear to man. However, I have no indisposition to give them that election

by furnishing all the means contemplated by the honorable and benevolent propositions submitted to our consideration. But, sir, while we wish to promote the happiness of these *free* people of colour, we ought to take care not furnish means of transporting out of reach of the master his property; which, I am sorry to say, has by the seductive conduct of a certain set of people under the pretexts of religion and the natural rights of man been seduced from his service. At this time there are thousands of that class in Philadelphia and it vicinage, living in indolence and consequent poverty—nothing would have a stronger tendency to effect the contemplated relief of the free people of colour, than some efficient laws to secure the restoration of those not entitled to liberty, to their masters, whose rights ought to be protected by law, and who without such law would be certainly sacrificed by the transportation of the free blacks with whom they would most certainly mix for that purpose. However, I feel no hesitation in saying I should be happy to see some plan for the gradual abolition of slavery, that would prepare the rising generation for that state, and remunerate the master our of the funds of the nation, amply abundant for that purpose, without being felt by the American people.

Mr. F.S KEY (of this District) suggested, that, with a view to exempt the object of the meeting from the possibility of misapprehension, there should be inserted in the resolves an express disclamation of any intention of the proposed association to touch the question of the abolition of slavery.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that such a clause would better enter into the articles of association when formed. To which Mr. Key assenting—

The question of adopting the Preamble & resolutions was taken and decided unanimously in the affirmative.

320 The Chairman was then authorized to appoint the committees; which having done,

321 the meeting adjourned to meet again on Saturday next.

322

323 *We understand Judge Washington to be alluded to, who was prevented by indisposition

324 from attending.--*Editors*

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[1] In the National Intelligencer account of the meeting, the conclusion of Caldwell's speech (ending with "peace on earth and good will to men" was not followed by the resolutions. Instead, the *Intelligencer* offered a bracketed description of what took place, which read: "[After concluding the remarks of which the proceedings is a brief sketch, Mr. C. offered a preamble, stating in a few words the object of the meeting, as already explained, and resolutions proposing the formation of an association to accomplish it, &c. the appointment of a committee to draft a constitution, and report in to the next meeting, and another committee to draft a Memorial to Congress relative to the subject.]"

The text of the preamble and resolutions was later printed in the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, February 1836, 55. In the *African Repository* account, the preamble and resolutions were printed after the comments of Robert Wright. However, the *African Repository* version of the text suggests that Caldwell offered the preamble and resolutions before Randolph spoke. The textual evidence in the *African Repository* comes in the reproduction of Randolph's comments, which contained the following opening line (brackets included): "The Hon. JOHN RANDOLPH (of Virginia) rose, and said, that it had been properly observed by the Chairman, that there was nothing in the proposition [*referring to the resolutions which follow*] submitted to consideration. . . " (54).

The placement of the bracketed description in the *National Intelligencer*, the suggestion that Randolph was responding to propositions that had been offered, and the use of the present tense by the editors of the *African Repository* to suggest that the resolutions follow the speech in the printed edition but did not follow the speech in the historic moment, provide strong warrants for the placement of the resolutions in the present, eclectic, re-creation of the text.

APPENDIX II:

TRANSCRIPT OF THE COUNTER MEMORIAL

DECEMBER 30, 1816

As Printed in the *National Intelligencer*, December 30, 1816

FOR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER

A Counter Memorial proposed, to be submitted to Congress in behalf of the free people of colour of the District of Columbia:

That your memorialists are free persons of colour, resident in the district of Columbia, born in the United States, and of parents born there also. That they know no country but that of their birth; and they are as free as they desire to be, and as happy as man can be. With *industry* they find *plenty*—with good morals *countenance* and *encouragement*—are made christians by the gospel, and instructed in the ways of the world by an enlightened and polished people. That your memorialists, content with their condition, have at all times endeavored so to conduct themselves, as to merit the good will and friendship of their white brethren. That if, in particular instances, individuals have been found wanting in duty to God and to society, your memorialists trust that such instances have been regarded as exceptions to their general demeanor. Scarcely any family or society of men being without its unworthy members, and that in estimating their usefulness by the virtues and vices which characterize them, they have not in the mass deserved censure or reproach. That, notwithstanding all this, your memorialists have learned, with no less concern than surprize, that divers white persons, at present unknown to your memorialists, have assembled together, of their own accord, without in any manner consulting your memorialists, and without authority of law, and are devising ways and means for the transportation of your memorialists beyond seas, without the allegation of any specific crimes or misdemeanor committed by your memorialists, and in violation, as they believe, of their personal liberty and free will. Your memorialists have

indeed, been given to understand, that the plans or projects of the aforesaid persons, are intended for the benefit and advantage of your memorialists, and that persuasion is to be employed rather than violence to induce your memorialists to leave their native country. Your memorialists, far from being insensible to the merits of their self-created benefactors, cannot but protest before your honorable body against the assumed right of any individuals whatever, by whatever motives actuated, to pass judgment on their condition. They are free men, and consider themselves in every respect qualified to determine for themselves what is, and what is not, for their own benefit and advantage: that indeed of all the rights and privileges which they hold under the constitution and laws, they consider the right to determine for themselves whether they be happy or not, by far the most natural, the most precious, and the most inviolable, and your memorialists are firmly resolved never to part with it but with their lives.

Human happiness is made up of too many and various ingredients for any one man to be a competent judge of the happiness of any other man—he who is miserable will not be happy though the whole world unite in proclaiming him happy—as, on the other hand, he who is happy will not be miserable though the whole world unite in proclaiming him miserable. When therefore your memorialists are informed that arbitrary associations of men assume to themselves the power to decree that your memorialists are miserable, when in truth and in fact they are content and happy, they cannot forbear in duty to themselves to call the attention of your honorable body to a species of despotism as unprecedented in this or any other country, as it is replete with evil to the best interests of your memorialists now and hereafter. Nor are your memorialists the less alarmed because they are informed that their self-styled benefactors are to resort to the mild

influence of persuasion to induce them to leave their country and go into voluntary exile. The men who assume to themselves the power to decree that other men are miserable, whether they be so or not, will easily pass from *persuasion to force*—and when your memorialists are further instructed that Africa is the place selected for their destination, a country inhabited only by savages and wild beasts—with a burning sun and torturing insects—poisonous exhalations, corrupted water and unwholesome food, your memorialists cannot forbear to indulge a suspicion that something more is intended than meets the eye, and that whilst their self-styled benefactors profess to leave nothing in view but their prosperity and welfare, they are in truth and in fact resolved to banish them from the land of their fathers, which they dearly love, and to deliver them over to be devoured by wild beasts, or destroyed by ferocious savages or a pestilential climate. Your memorialists, are therefore filled with terror and anxiety, and humbly pray your honorable body to interpose your authority in time to save them from calamities so awful, and afflictions so heavy, and they pray the Almighty to turn the hearts of their persecutors from the purposes so unrighteous and uncharitable, repeating to your honorable body their protestation that your memorialists are as happy as a people can be—that they desire no change whatever in their condition, and that they have no wish but the single one to be left to the enjoyment of what they have without molestation, and to be saved harmless from the officious intermeddlings of false friends and self-styled benefactors. Your memorialists call heaven and earth to witness they would rather die than quit their native country; that they never will consent to go to Africa, or any other country; but that they will cling to this their native soil whilst they have breath, and be buried where their fathers before them are buried. It is known to your memorialists, that they have been

represented, by some, nuisances in the society in which they live, and that they will continue to be so, so long as the prejudices exist against the *color* of your memorialists. – For their *color* your memorialists do not conceive themselves answerable to man, it being the gift of God—but they cannot dissemble their astonishment and indignation that those who profess to acknowledge them their *equals* in all things should make a difference of color the cause of their transportation and banishment; they were inclined to cherish the belief, that philosophers and statesmen would see in those prejudices a remedy, at once natural, easy and efficacious—your memorialists mean the remedy of *amalgamation*—For it is very plain and obvious to your memorialists, that the enlightened benefactors of the African race would not hesitate to set the example for bringing about a state of things, which, more than any other, would hasten the accomplishment of their grand designs. Among your memorialists are very many young men, of industrious and sober habits, of ordinary school education, and of mechanic trades, who would not feel themselves degraded by intermarriages with the whites. In a few generations the odious distinction of color would pass away, and the posterity of your memorialists would find themselves blended with the great American family—their equals in color, as your memorialists are now acknowledged to be their equals in everything else. That this remedy of amalgamation may speedily take the place of the detestable one of transportation and banishment, which your memorialists cannot contemplate but with horror, your memorialists will ever pray, &c.

[The reader will not receive the arguments of the proceeding article as the serious opinions of the writer. His object, it is apparent, is to endeavor, by ridicule, to check the

93 progress of the Colonization Plan, which has recently been started in Virginia and New
94 Jersey, and taken up in this district—we have thought in proper to insert this note, lest
95 any one might mistake for gravity the well-meant irony of our correspondent.]

APPENDIX III:

CONTEXTUALIST HISTORY

(A NOTE ON METHOD)

Studying the Colonization Meeting through Contextualist History

This project, like most scholarly endeavors, began with what Bernard L. Brock and Robert L. Scott call "an impulse" and Stephen Pepper refers to as "the incidents of life."[1] I came across the activities of the Colonization in a reading on another subject and I had a hunch that there was more going on in the discourse of colonization than I could grasp at first glance. Equipped only with my experience as a rhetorician and no foreknowledge of early nineteenth century politics, I chased the rabbit of colonization into the rabbit hole. The current project, being the product of my "chasing," studies the different themes that were significant to colonization and how the speakers navigated these themes. This purpose is best pursued by studying rhetoric in the historical moment. Raymie McKerrow and E. Culpepper Clark remind us, "History need not function separate from the argument that contains it."[2] Like McKerrow and Clark, and others, my disposition is to understand past events as they are contained in the arguments of the time.

Yet, my work on colonization may also be defined as criticism of the rhetorical strategies encompassed with the colonization convention. Brock and Scott argued, "[Hu]man[s] cannot completely repress the critical impulse because it is part of learning how to act toward something or someone."[3] Making sense of colonization, then, has critical components. Thus, it is not enough to simply state that my perspective is

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[1] Bernard L. Brock and Robert L. Scott, eds. *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-Century Perspective*. 2nd ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), 1, 16; Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 233.

[2] E. Culpepper Clark and Raymie E. McKerrow, "The Rhetorical Construction of History," in *Doing Rhetorical History*, Kathleen J. Turner, ed., (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 42.

[3] Brock and Scott, *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism*, 16.

"historical." It is also not enough to define my perspective as "critical." The habits of the mind which form my thinking on the current subject encompass assumptions of both the historical and critical modes. In this section, I go further to explain the historical-critical act as it pertains to my exploration of the rhetoric of the colonization convention.

It is best to begin with this project at the conceptual level and the historical and critical assumptions that inform this work. Hayden White explained how history and criticism can coexist as the "mode of argument" in the conceptualization of historic work.[4] Beyond emplotting a "narrative account of 'what happened,'" the mode of argument in history explicates "'the point of it all' or 'what it all adds up to.'"[5] In explaining the larger meaning of events, White argued, "historical explanations are bound to be based on different metahistorical presuppositions . . . that generate different conceptions of the *kind of explanations*" that historians employ to explain their subject.[6] As the kind of explanation is revealed in the "discursive argument" of the writer, the historian working in the mode of argument has decidedly critical impulses. White, drawing upon the work of Stephen Pepper, offered four kinds of historical explanations: formist, mechanist, contextualist, and organicist. The present project identifies most closely with contextualism and its ways of explaining the past.

Contextualism takes the historic event as its root metaphor, or basis of interpretation. It sees events as setting within a flow of people and forces that give those events shape. A contextualist however, plays the text/context relationship; that is, a

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[4] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 5. On the notion of criticism and history being linked to argument, I am also drawing from Wayne Brockriede, "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (1974): 165-74.

[5] White, *Metahistory*, 11.

[6] White, *Metahisotry*, 13 (emphasis in original).

contextualist believes that one of the most important functions of rhetoric is to assemble elements of context and turn them into forces that unite people in forging the shape of the historical moment. Thus, to a contextualist, history is not studied as a "past event, one that is, so to speak, dead and has to be exhumed."[7] Instead, the historic event is alive in the historic present, "it is going on now."[8] This perspective leads to what Stephen Pepper calls the "specious present."[9] Indeed, the challenge to a contextualist historian is to bring the past moment alive in the present, to transport the reader to the place and time to sense the creative possibilities of the contextualist moment. In terms of the dissertation project, I take the colonization convention in 1816 as the historic event and then seek to understand the possibilities available to the speakers of the colonization convention. In doing so, I aim to show the dynamic forces at work on the subject of colonization at that moment.

As the contextualist encounters the dynamic historic event, two basic categories structure the interpretation of the moment: quality and texture. Pepper explained, "[T]he quality of a given event is its intuited wholeness or total character; the texture is the details and relationships which make up that character or quality."[10] The basic movement in contextualist thinking is the move back and forth between quality and texture, between having a kind of intuitive sense for an event and detailing an explanation of that event. A contextualist historian works between the intuitive sense for that historical moment and the antecedent and consequent elements that the text pulls from the context and brings

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[7] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, 232.

[8] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, 232.

[9] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, 236.

[10] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, 238.

into power within the moment. It is also important to note that for a contextualist historian or critic, this movement between quality and texture describes what is happening at the moment under study, but also describes how the historian/critic works. That is, the historian or critic works back and forth between their intuitive sense for the rhetorical power of a moment and the kind of hard scholarly digging that supports or refutes that intuitive judgment.

Pepper describes this contextualist dialectic between intuition and detail as governed by the constant locating and working with "strands." Strands are lines of inquiry or themes that are pulled into the historical moment by discourse. In this project, I have identified the themes of political economy, security, and morality as the strands that are pulled into the discourse of the convention. Pepper's image is of many strands meeting in the discourse of the historic moment, pulling context together into a fused transformation that creates dynamic history. The act of stranding, of pulling themes into the historic moment, is not simply the move of the critic or historian. The contextualist paradigm also functions as an explanation of rhetorical invention. In a particular moment, rhetors also call upon themes available to them in an attempt to influence or transform persons' perspectives on a given subject. For scholar or speaker, Pepper's description of how strands are drawn into discourse provides a way of conceptualizing how texts and contexts interact.

To summarize, texture and quality are inseparable categories and as such, the contextualist moves between the texture and the quality to make sense of an historic moment. This movement or play is dialectical in its pattern. Based upon the movement between texture and quality, the result of a contextualist's explanation is a newly formed,

synthetic insight. At the conceptual level, then, my way of investigating the colonization convention is to derive the significant strands of texture from the text of the convention and consider how these strands transform the discourse and how the discourse, then, transforms the strands. My efforts in this study are best described in terms of the contextualist. Working from "the present event outward," I seek to better understand the transformative and novel event that was the colonization convention.[11] If successful, this movement will not reveal itself in properly labeled sections of "texture" and "quality" for each chapter. Instead, the aim is to weave the texture and quality together in order to provide new insight on the rhetoric of the national colonization movement.

[11] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, 278.

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