REPRODUCING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

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"I shall never have his voice for my phonograph..."
Frances E. Willard: *Letter to Helen Pitts Douglass* (1895)

VOICE

When Ida B. Wells-Barnett traveled to England in June 1894, she took copies of Frederick Douglass's pamphlet *Lessons of the Hour* with her. In a letter she informs Douglass that she "could have disposed of hundreds if I had them," adding that some of her "London friends wish to know if you will give them permission to republish it on this side, so they can circulate it."[1] Wells-Barnett is most likely referring to the elaborately designed pamphlet published by Thomas & Evans, Baltimore, whose cover page bears the title of the lecture along with Douglass's name, the venue at which Douglass held the lecture, the publisher's name, and, placed at the center, a sketched copy by an unknown artist (with the initials C. H. W.) of a photograph from 1882 taken by John Howe Kent in Rochester, New York.[2]

In the nineteenth century, it was common for public orators such as Douglass to publish and distribute lectures in the form of printed pamphlets that would at times even circulate internationally. Such pamphlets served as souvenirs, educational texts, propaganda, and above all as the speakers' printed mouthpiece, with which they would spread their messages beyond the auditorium. Focusing on the history of African-American pamphleteering in particular, the editors of the anthology *Pamphlets of Protest* show that Black orators "often polished their sermons or speeches, turning them into pamphlets," arguing that the written texts started "with orality."[3]

The following focuses on the shift from spoken to printed word, from oratory to the act of reading, in Frederick Douglass's practice of pamphleteering. I argue that Douglass's pamphlets not only started with orality but ultimately sought to result in orality – to allow his readers to hear him speak – thus turning the pamphlet into the central part of an intricate media transformation from spoken word to written text to acts of public or private reading and vocal reiteration.[4] Of course, Douglass was not a traditional pamphleteer. He hardly ever wrote pamphlets, but produced scripts for lectures, which were then reproduced in print. These dozens of pamphlets, which were either commissioned by Douglass himself or printed after requests from supporters, can be understood as recording

1 Ida B. Wells-Barnett: "Letter to Frederick Douglass, Frederick Douglass Papers: General Correspondence, 1841–1912; 1894, June–July", in: Library of Congress, www . loc . gov / item / mss1187900123/.

2 For a brief history of the image, see John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, Celeste-Marie Bernier (eds.): *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*, New York: Liveright (2018), pp. 62–63.

3 Peter Newman, Patrick Rael, Philip Lapsansky: "Introduction: The Theme of Our Contemplation", in: *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature, 1790–1860*, ed. by Peter Newman, Patrick Rael, Philip Lapsansky, New York: Routledge (2001), pp. 1–31, p. 3.

4 I want to thank John Stauffer and Maurice Wallace for helping me conceive this idea in its earliest stages.

devices intended to reproduce Douglass's oratory and to invite the readers to reenact the events and actively participate in Douglass's aesthetic education of reform.

During his lifetime, Douglass's extraordinary voice and eloquence were emphasized by his physical presence and the theatricality of his language. The pamphlet became a surrogate for Douglass, seeking to accommodate the absence of its unique origin, of the here and now of the original speech, of Douglass's presence in the room, i.e., of his aura. Clearly cherishing the role of being *the* generational voice, Douglass's pamphleteering already highlighted the rift between aura and reproducibility, which Walter Benjamin would go on to explore in an unmatched fashion. The pamphlet thus navigated a path between the speech's "unique existence in a particular place" and the threat that its reproduction may "devalue the here and now."[5] Douglass's reform activism required reproducibility, and both the actual oration and the succeeding pamphlet were reproducible media, the one being repeatedly performed on tour, the other being a print publication. Yet whereas the speaker certainly reproduces the act of speaking, each performance is unique; the same lecture can never be held in the exact same way. The pamphlet, in contrast, is a medium of print reproduction, distributed by the hundreds, reaching each reader in a comparable material condition and turning readers into distributors, as the opening example of Ida B. Wells-Barnett shows.

RECORDING

After Douglass died in February 1895, friends and followers celebrated the voice that "rang out in every part of this country," as Francis J. Grimké noted in his memorial service address.[6] For more than five decades, Douglass toured the United States (and parts of Europe) to deliver countless speeches and lectures. Wherever he went his voice "rang out," and whoever was part of the audience could enjoy Douglass's eloquence and theatricality. Given the technological circumstances of his time, Douglass's voice could only travel when he traveled. Radio still needed to be invented and although the technology was already in place, an audio recording of Frederick Douglass's voice was most likely never produced, even though the older Douglass celebrated the invention of the phonograph. In a letter in 1894, after he listened to a phonograph recording for the first time, Douglass wrote that he found comfort in the idea that "though being dead and turned to dust a man's voice may yet live and speak."[7] So, the notion of the ringing voice should not be brushed aside as mere adulation, for it centers on a media aesthetic twist indicative of Douglass's visionary career as orator, reformer, and public persona. As if he anticipated Grimké's remark, Douglass, toward the end of *Lessons of the Hour*, imagines what he would say, could he, at

5 Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [1936]", in: *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, New York: W. W. Norton & Company (2018), pp. 976–996.

6 Reprinted in: *In Memoriam: Frederick Douglass*, Philadelphia: John C. Yorston & Co (1897), p. 177.

7 Frederick Douglass: *Lessons of the Hour*, Baltimore: Thomas & Evans (1894).

that very moment, not only address the attending audience but in fact "be heard by this great nation."[8] His entire career as reform activist was marked by a sense of urgency and a celebration of confrontation and immediacy, and "he desired nothing more than that his spoken and written voice would survive infinitely for humankind."[9] His prophetic vision always had to be able not only to impact the present but to stand the test of time. Reform, both in rhetoric and action, needed to be palpable; it needed to erupt, endure, and thus capture audiences across space and time. For this to happen, Douglass relied on an intricate network of lectures, autobiographical accounts, literary narratives, newspaper editorials, correspondence, photographs, and pamphlets. Yet in order to engage further with the idea of the travelling voice, particular attention needs to be paid to the transformation from lecture to pamphlet, from spoken to written word, from the act of listening to the act of reading.

In his "Letter from the Editor," published in *The North Star* on November 23, 1949, Douglass recapped an anti-slavery convention and famously declared:

> *Speech! speech!* the live, calm, grave, clear, pointed, warm, sweet, melodious and powerful human voice, is his chosen instrumentality. The pen is not to be despised, but who that knows anything of the might and electricity of speech as it bursts from hearts of fire, glowing with light and life, will not acknowledge the superiority over the pen for immediate effect. Astronomy, Zoology, Botany, Conchology, Chemistry, and Geology, are fit subjects for the pen, but humanity, justice and liberty, demand the service of the living human voice, and the power of exalted eloquence, as their expedient.[10]

Here, Douglass does not merely advocate phonocentrism to celebrate speech as a more adequate means than writing to present oneself to the world. With a wink, he uses the editor's pen to stress the importance of speech as an analogy for the speaker's physical presence. Unlike Derrida's critique of phonocentrism as a logocentric overvaluation of "*presence*," Douglass's call to use the voice in order to demand "humanity, justice and liberty" zeroes in on the historically specific need for abolitionist speakers at this particular place in time to make their presence felt, to invade public spaces, and to transform listeners into fellow activists.[11] Douglass, the Black orator, was convinced that speech would "let slavery present its brazen front" while "slavery is a poor orator when confronted by an abolitionist."[12] Douglass is not invested in the philosophical quarrel over phonocentrism but in the political and, as such, highly performative act of confrontation.

8 Douglass: *Lessons of the Hour* (1894), p. 36.

9 David W. Blight: *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, New York: Simon & Schuster (2018), p. 752.

10 Frederick Douglass: "Letter from the Editor", in: *The North Star* (November 23, 1849), p. 2, p. 2 (emphasis in the original).

11 Jacques Derrida: *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1997 [1967]), p. 12 (emphasis in the original).

12 Douglass: "Letter from the Editor" (1849), p. 2 (emphasis in the original).

In his celebration of speech, the blossoming orator still relished the experience of meticulously studying Caleb Bingham's *The Columbian Orator*, this "rich treasure," which he bought for fifty cents as a teenager in Maryland.[13] The young Frederick Douglass (then Frederick Bailey) knew that literacy was the path to freedom and speech would become the ultimate means to confront the oppressor. Accordingly, Douglass notes, Bingham's book "enabled me to give tongue to many interesting thoughts, which had frequently flashed through my soul, and died away for want of utterance," it taught him to turn the ability to read and write into the art of oratory and to re-form words on paper into a spectacle.[14]

MOVEMENT

Given the tenacious training in his youth, the famous orator wanted his audiences and his readers to be *moved*. Whether emotionally, intellectually, morally, or physically, Douglass turned affective, aesthetic, and intellectual movement into the prerequisite for all social and political reform movements. Yet how could a print publication, the pamphlet in particular, do justice to this elaborate principle? Even though it could not possibly afford its readers the extraordinary experience of listening to a lecture, it nonetheless allowed for a performative mode of reception. Part of which relies on the pamphlet's function to produce and connect a public. In Douglass's case, pamphlets usually grew out of the public experience of lectures, only to be distributed in print to say, yet again, "Hello, public!," as Michael Warner stresses, and to call out to the reader, "I need your voice!"[15] When the editors of *Pamphlets of Protest* note that Henry Highland Garnet, editor of the 1848 edition of David Walker's *Appeal*, actually "never met Walker," that he "never heard his voice – except in the pages of the man's pamphlet,"[16] they allude to the pamphlet as a cross-media phenomenon that allows the written word to transcend into the sphere of aurality. The performative act of what might best be described as "voicing the pamphlet" is as old as the pamphlet itself. Considering the historical overlap of limited literacy and the pamphlet's emergence as a printed and reproduced medium across sixteenth-century Europe, a pamphlet was never merely to be read; it always desired and required to be voiced and listened to. And Douglass understood the pamphlet's inherent performativity as well as anybody. In his career, the pamphlet quickly became an integral part of a four-step media transformation that consists of (1) Douglass's oratory as public performance, (2) the records of public reception (i.e., accounts of Douglass's performance on stage), (3) the publication and distribution of the speech's print version in the form of a pamphlet, and (4) the act of reading the pamphlet and thereby reenacting and ultimately reproducing Douglass.

13 Frederick Douglass: "My Bondage and My Freedom [1855]", in: *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates Jr., New York: Library of America (1994), pp. 103–452, p. 225.

14 Douglass: "My Bondage and My Freedom [1855]" (1994), p. 226.

15 Michael Warner: *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York: Zone Books (2005), p. 7 (emphasis in the original).

16 Newman, Rael, Lapsansky: "Introduction" (2001), p. 1.

PERFORMANCE

After his flight from bondage, Douglass joined the anti-slavery movement and ultimately became an orator on the abolition lecture circuit. His self-confidence and his commitment to rhetoric and eloquence notwithstanding, at the beginning of his career as an abolitionist (who was, in legal terms, still a fugitive slave), Douglass feared listening to Black speeches as much as he dreaded raising his own voice in a predominantly white environment. In a testimonial for the Reverend John W. E. Bowen in August 1891, less than four years prior to his death, Douglass reflects upon what may best be described as the cultural and social history of Black American speech. He addresses Bowen directly: "Sir: – There was a time in my life when I dreaded to hear a man of color rise to speak in the presence of white people. I feared that he would supply added proof of our ignorance and inferiority. That day is past."[17] Douglass recalls a time when the hegemonic weight of white supremacy made him anxious at the very idea of public Black utterance, a time when "he had not dreamed of the possibility of becoming a public advocate," a time when he would "only whisper in private," as he writes in *My Bondage and My Freedom*.[18] Telling the story of his inauguration as a public speaker, Douglass argues that he himself suffered from "the utmost difficulty that I could stand erect, or that I could command and articulate two words without hesitation and stammering. I trembled in every limb."[19] To make oneself heard and listened to publicly was not part of Black social life, in the South or in the North, but it became the essence of his desire to forge a community of letters that would excel in the intricacy of speaking and listening, of writing and reading. The author of three bestselling autobiographies and a literarily respectable novella, Douglass would indeed become one of the most prolific writers of his time, but his early experiences as a public speaker strengthened his belief in the superiority of the spoken word, which would remain unabated until the end of his life. For Douglass, the immediate connection between orality and aurality, between his act of speaking and the audience's capacity to listen, produced a particular sensation, an aura perhaps, which could not be matched by the experience of reading a printed text – at least when the latter was not a work of literary art but was concerned with matters of social and political reform.

Reform activism needed to be palpable, calls for change needed to be heard and they needed to be *voiced*, and performances in an auditorium allowed for just that. Douglass's "oratorial style, even to gestures and dramatic pauses, was taken from Bingham's instructions."[20] Bingham and the great orators of Western history taught Douglass that nuances, tiny shifts and changes in pronunciation

17 Frederick Douglass: "Great is the Miracle of Human Speech: An Address Delivered in Washington, D.C., On 31 August 1891", in: *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One, Volume 5*, ed. by John W. Blassingame, John R. McKivigan, New Haven and London: Yale University Press (1992), pp. 474–477.

18 Douglass: "My Bondage and My Freedom [1855]" (1994), p. 363.

19 Douglass: "My Bondage and My Freedom [1855]" (1994), p. 364.

20 Dickson J. Preston: *Young Frederick Douglass*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (2018 [1980]), p. 115.

and enunciation, as well as attention to posture and facial expressions played a part in creating, capturing and cultivating audiences. Reform needed to be orchestrated and orchestration depended on a highly sensitive balance of emphasis and restraint, action and passion. In short, Douglass treated reform as a performative art form, which could not solely rely on the often solitary experience of reading in silence. Yet Douglass's oratory did not merely unfold in the forcefulness of his eloquence; he repeatedly stressed the power of oratory as a complex performance in which mind and body, intellect and physical presence, needed to act completely in sync.



1 Unknown, *Frederick Douglass* (ca. 1877), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress.

Public performances, i.e., the act of engaging a public in the spell of one's presence, needed to become a "total experience,"[21] as John Blassingame notes. Douglass was constantly honing the theatricality of his public performances, so much so that his second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, thought her husband was trying to make a point when he fell to his knees during a conversation on a February evening in 1895, when in fact he was dying. Throughout his public and private life, Douglass relished moments in which an audience "became as much excited

21 John W. Blassingame: "Introduction to Series One", in: *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One, Volume 1*, ed. by John W. Blassingame, New Haven and London: Yale University Press (1979), pp. xxi–lxix, p. xxv.

as myself,"[22] and he relished face-to-face confrontation, of which his celebration of oratory performances is as indicative as his love affair with photography.

IMAGE

In the logic of the "total experience," Douglass wanted not only to be heard but also seen – seeking to make his presence felt, both in the moment and beyond it. In the 1860s, Douglass became more and more obsessed with the question of how to democratize public action and social reform, and he turned this question into a media-historical exploration. In practice and theory, Douglass was fascinated with the technology of early photography. He had his portrait taken more than 150 times, ultimately becoming the most photographed American in the nineteenth century, all the while attending to media-theoretical lectures on the cultural history and future of human picture-making as an aesthetic practice of reform.[23] The nationwide distribution of his photographic images, Douglass believed, could eventually forge a community of reform and resistance. Seven decades prior to Benjamin's paradigmatic analysis of the matter, Douglass was already touching upon the social dynamics of media reproducibility. While his speeches and articles had been circulating in auditoriums, households, schools, and offices for some time, Douglass was intrigued by the idea that photography would eventually allow massively reproduced pictures of social leaders, not least his own likeness, to likewise circulate and accompany the pieces of writing. In 1870, he writes in a letter to his friend, the printer Louis Prang,

> Heretofore, colored Americans have thought little of adorning parlors with pictures [...] Pictures come not with slavery and oppression and destitution, but with liberty, fair play, leisure, and refinement. These conditions are now possible to colored American citizens, and I think the walls of their houses will soon begin to bear evidence of their altered relations to the people about them.[24]

The reproduction of his photographic portrait, as seen below on one of the walls of Howard University's law library around 1900, would mediate the message of the respective sitter, and since, as Douglass was persuaded, it could not be compromised by the white gaze, it would adequately represent the reformers in their absence. And Douglass demanded that his audiences – his readers as well as the

22 Douglass: "My Bondage and My Freedom [1855]" (1994), p. 364.

23 See *Picturing Frederick Douglass* (2018). On the relationship between pictures and political progress in African-American cultural history, see Maurice O. Wallace, Shawn Michelle Smith (eds.): *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African-American Identity*, Durham: Duke University Press (2012); on Douglass, pictures, and aesthetic freedom, see Dustin Breitenwischer: "Creative Democracy and Aesthetic Freedom: Notes on John Dewey and Frederick Douglass", in: *REAL* 34 (2018), pp. 47–63.

24 Frederick Douglass: "Letter to Louis Prang [1870]", in: *The Chromolithographs of Louis Prang*, ed. by Katherine M. McClinton, New York: Potter (1973), p. 37.



2 Unknown, *Howard Univ., Washington, D.C., ca. 1900 – Law library* (ca. 1900), Washington, D.C: Library of Congress.

viewers of his photographs – endure his at times unforgiving presence. His fascination with the possibilities of media reproduction lends a curious aesthetic and sociopolitical dynamic to his pamphleteering. Douglass was not just Douglass, but "Douglass," a product of the public imagination, an idealized persona, an idol. "He had used the power of the word (and of his own voice) to write himself into public existence. He continually revised and redefined himself through language," thus "updating his public image."[25] And he had not only "developed above all a literary identity, a man of words spoken and written," but was transformed in the public imagination into a quasi-literary character.[26] Quite frankly, Douglass had developed an aura. He appeared, to use Benjamin's definition of the term, to be "the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be."[27] Douglass was an auratic spectacle, equipped with aesthetic qualities comparable to a work of art. Over the course of his public career, this exemplary representative of his race (as he was regarded during his early days on the abolition circuit) became a "representative man" in the Emersonian sense, an exceptional figure in the art of reform. His books may not have reached every household, his voice may not have been

25 John Stauffer: *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2004), p. 45.

26 Blight: *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (2018), p. 88.

27 Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [1936]" (2018), p. 980.

heard in every town, and his likeness may not have adorned every parlor, but his image traveled well beyond the bookshelves, auditoriums, and studios, affording him an ever-growing presence on both sides of the Atlantic.

READING

Since Douglass's speeches were often more than two hours long, reading them in pamphlet form was an evening-filling event. But aside from their excessive length (their "discourse time," to use a narratological term), the genre of the pamphlet relies on a peculiar temporality, being "both a medium of the moment – allowing protesters to publish quickly their views – and a substantial document that could stand the test of time."[28] The success of a pamphlet therefore depended on it simultaneously having an immediate and a lasting impact. The pamphlet addresses and activates the reader as a spatially and temporally (today even historically) distant member of an implied audience with a shared cause, turning any place of reception into an auditorium, and thereby creating an "aural space,"[29] as Erika Fischer-Lichte argues, via the act of reading.

"Friends and Fellow Citizens" – the readers of Douglass's *Lessons of the Hour* are being spoken to and thus instantly become an integral part of the media transformation from speech to writing to reenactment. So, in order for it to be and remain an impactful part of a larger reform movement, the given lecture must not exhaust itself in the immediacy of the live event. It needs the pamphlet, which is able to reactivate, at least to some degree, the speech's performativity. The success of such a reactivation depends on three interrelated elements: the printed text, certain elements of what may best be described as the pamphlet's paratextual environment (an adequately designed cover page, newspaper coverage, eyewitness reports of the lecture, etc.), and a willingness on the part of the readers to turn the act of reading into an event-like reenactment, in which they cast off the limiting position of recipients of the text and become active orators of the speech. Comparable to the process of a theater production (as the transformation of a text into a performance), the success of such a reactivation depends on the ability of text, paratext, and reader to give presence to the voice of the absent orator.

Adding to his celebration of speech in the late 1840s, Douglass, like many other orators and writers at the time, was undoubtedly aware that "print carried black voices through space and time: space, so that a broader national community of black leaders and white citizens could see African-American arguments; and time, so that subsequent generations of black as well as white readers could refer back to African-American documents."[30] After all, it was his ability to read and thus engage with the print culture of the day that had freedom appearing "to disap-

28 Newman, Rael, Lapsansky: "Introduction" (2001), p. 2.

29 Erika Fischer-Lichte: *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, London and New York: Routledge (2008), p. 122.

30 Newman, Rael, Lapsansky: "Introduction" (2001), p. 4.

pear no more," as he tells the readers of his *Narrative*.[31] In turn, reading Douglass's pamphlets was often a communal event. As David W. Blight has shown with regard to *Lessons of the Hour*, the lecture's pamphlet circulated among workers at the Record and Pensions Bureau of the War Department, "[p]atients gathered in the District of Columbia Homeopathic Hospital to read the speech," "entire families were discussing the speech," and "[h]is granddaughter Estelle Sprague wrote to tell Douglass that at the school in which she taught in Virginia the entire student body gathered on a Sunday to listen to the young teacher read aloud."[32] It is fair to assume that before and after *Lessons of the Hour*, hundreds of similar gatherings were taking place across the nation.

On the one hand, of course, such communal reading events were necessary simply because the rate of illiteracy in the Black population was still high;[33] but on the other hand, those events also created the idea of an audience whose members would treat the pamphlet as an oral and aural medium. Due to the illiteracy of the enslaved men and women on Georgia plantations, abolitionist and pamphleteer Harrison Berry went so far as to have slave owners read aloud passages from his pamphlets.[34]

The poetic language of Douglass's lectures virtually demanded to be read out loud, as if it was indeed poetry, and one can only imagine how students, families, co-workers, friends, and loved ones gathered around the reader of the given pamphlet to take in Douglass's words, listening to the reader and imagining how the great orator enunciated, paused, and gestured. If we trust the reports of his contemporaries, the mere material existence of the printed words of Douglass's pamphlets, the pale presence of printed words on paper, could no longer do justice to the more expansive experience of these communal or solitary receptions that were taking place in a culture fully accustomed to the power and the nuances of lecturing and pamphleteering as social and aesthetic practices. The power of the lecture and the power of the press generated the "power of publicity."[35] And Douglass's publicity was almost unmatched in the nineteenth century. Stories about his lectures, descriptions of his voice and posture reached every corner of the reform-oriented parts of the United States, so that readers of his pamphlets were acutely aware of and had their readings shaped by Douglass's aesthetics,

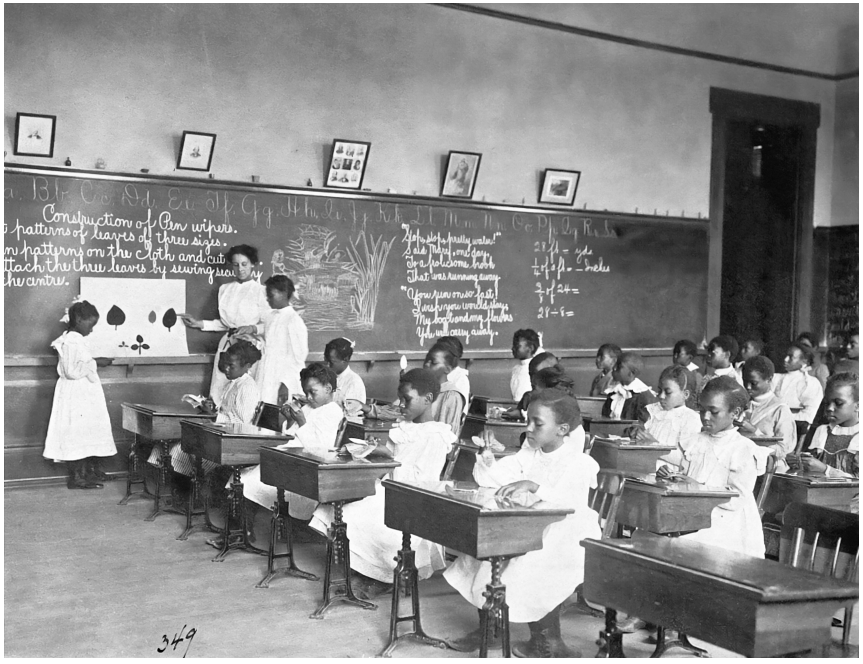
31 Frederick Douglass: "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written By Himself [1845]", in: *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates Jr., New York: Library of America (1994), pp. 1–102, p. 43.

32 Blight: *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (2018), pp. 747–748.

33 Although literacy among the Black population grew steadily between the end of the Civil War and Douglass's death in the mid-1890s, in 1870, roughly eighty percent, in 1890, 57.1 percent, and in 1900, 44.5 percent of Black Americans were illiterate. See: "Story Behind the Number: Literacy and Lynchings", in: *NPR – All Things Considered*, https://www.npr.org/2006/02/04/5189912/story-behind-the-number-literacy-and-lynchings (February 4, 2006); and Walter F. Willcox: "The Negro Population", in: *Negroes in the United States*, ed. by S.N.D. North, Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census (1904) (= Bulletin 8), pp. 11–99, online: https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/03322287no8ch1.pdf.

34 Clarence L. Mohr: "Harrison Berry: A Black Pamphleteer in Georgia During Slavery and Freedom," in: *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 67/2 (Summer 1983): pp. 189–205.

35 Joad Raymond: *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2003), p. 160.



3 Frances Benjamin Johnston, *African American Schoolgirls in Classroom, Learning to Sew* (ca. 1899), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress.

his style of performance, and his theatricality. When a worker, a patient, or his granddaughter addressed their respective audiences with the words "Friends and Fellow Citizens," it was Douglass's voice that rang out.

REPRODUCIBILITY

In tone, rhetoric, and pictures, Douglass stressed the "power of imagination,"[36] urging his readers by virtue of his eloquence to make his total presence felt. Only then would the pamphlet become the embodiment of the voice and a surrogate for the performance. Despite his absence, he would be able to capture the room.

Remembering the late Douglass, Rev. Jeremiah E. Rankin, then president of Howard University, left us with an extraordinary description of Douglass's presence:

> Mr. Douglass had a commanding figure, a commanding presence, a commanding voice. In all these there is leadership. There was something more there. When he rose to his feet, when an audience saw that dignified and se-

36 John Stauffer: "Frederick Douglass, Photography, and Imagination", in: *Traveling Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Cultural Concepts and Transatlantic Intellectual Networks*, ed. by Erik Redling, Berlin: De Gruyter (2016), pp. 113–138, p. 134.



4 Unknown, *Hon. Fred. Douglass on platform in [the] Pavilion* (26 March 1892), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress.

> rious but kindly face, that venerable and seer-like aspect, when they heard that voice, it arrested attention and hushed everyone to silence and expectation. Utterance with him was the considerate and judicious gathering of great forces; like the gathering of a storm in the sky; now and then a distant mutter, then the marshaling of the winds and the sweeping of the clouds across the horizon; then the descending thunderbolt and the lightning flash; then the rolling back of the clouds as a curtain, the return of the sunshine and the song of birds and the laughter of children. Mr. Douglass' voice was of unequaled depth and volume and power.[37]

Returning to the idea of the "total experience" then, the success of Douglass's reform activism depended on the success of the reproducibility of the media transformation, of creating an auratic experience after "devaluing" the aura. Against the backdrop of this conundrum, Douglass's voice and words (and images) follow a complex choreography that wants to transform listeners and readers into agents of reform – they need to be activated and become active. And the pamphlet needed to be able to cater to its readers' affects almost as effectively as did Douglass's unique oratory.

Readers of Douglass's *Lessons of the Hour*, for example, whether facing a group of listeners or reciting the text to themselves, needed to will into existence

37 Reprinted in *In Memoriam: Frederick Douglass* (1897), p. 32 and 35.

the rhythm of his sentences ("Prison walls and iron bars"), the disturbingly melodic sequences of alliterations ("blood," "blindly," "boldly"; "press," "platform," "pulpit"), the confrontational and simultaneously inclusive manner of address ("*I* will tell *you*, and *I* venture to say that if *our* hearts"), the captivating imagery ("bullets in their pockets, treason in their hearts, broad blades in their blood stained hands"), the irony and sarcasm of rhetorical questions ("Can the negro be a citizen?," "Can the negro be educated?," "Can the negro be a soldier?"), and the perpetual enforcement and reinforcement of emphasis (more than twenty paragraphs open with "Now," "Again," or "But").[38] With his pamphlets, Douglass sets his readers a challenging task, for they must create a legitimate listening experience that, while able to echo the experience of hearing Douglass speak, is certainly unable to match it. The intricacies of language and rendering forge an auratic relationship between the one who speaks and the one who listens, having an immediate and often lasting effect.

Toward the end of his life – when he had become the most photographed American of the nineteenth century and when, as the *Chicago Tribune* noted, "No man, black or white, had been better known for nearly half a century in this country" – Douglass's career reached the pinnacle of what had, for the longest time, been "in some way a marketing operation."[39] The distribution and circulation of pictures and pamphlets allowed him to reach a wider audience with the messages of his lectures and thus cater to a performative act of reception that revolved around the highly esteemed power of the imagination and his understanding of reform as a socio-aesthetic movement. In the spirit of the performativity of the self, the pamphlet itself must be understood as a medium of reform, given that its existence is based on the transformation, i.e., the material *re-forming*, of a speech performance into a printed text and that its purpose lies in the ensuing transformation from written text to spoken word. As a medium of reform activism, the pamphlet is a recording and reproducing device that allows for the reenacted presence of the speaker and the constitution of communities across space and time. In reproducing Douglass, the pamphlet does not merely want to be read, but it seeks to be heard.

38 Douglass: *Lessons of the Hour* (1894), pp. 5, 4, 6, 6 (emphasis added), 11, 36.

39 Reprinted in: *In Memoriam: Frederick Douglass* (1897), pp. 296–297; Blight: *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (2018), p. 747.

PICTURE CREDITS

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2 *Projet de l'impôt patriotique, donné par Mad. de Gouges, dans le mois de sept.re 1788*, [Paris] ([1789]), Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, collection Hennin, 10181, http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb40257593r. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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4 @epkaufm, https://twitter.com/epkaufm/status/869474176641511424/photo/1 (20 May 2017); @ByDonkeys, https://twitter.com/ByDonkeys/status/1103728300403363843/photo/1 (7 March 2019).

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1 Unknown, *Wha wants me* (26 December 1792), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Online: https://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3j00005/.
2 Robert Seymour, *The March of Intellect* (ca. 1828), London: British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum

REPRODUCING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1 Unknown, *Frederick Douglass* (ca. 1877), Washington, D.C.: Brady-Handy photograph collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Online: https://loc.gov/item/2017895330/.
2 Unknown, *Howard Univ., Washington, D.C., ca. 1900 – Law library* (ca. 1900), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Online: https://loc.gov/pictures/collection/anedub/item/2001705791/.
3 Frances Benjamin Johnston, *African American Schoolgirls in Classroom, Learning to Sew* (ca. 1899), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.
4 Unknown, *Hon. Fred. Douglass on platform in [the] Pavilion* (26 March 1892), Washington, D.C.: Booker T. Washington Collection, Library of Congress. Online: https://loc.gov/item/98500648/.

BORN-TRANSLATED MANIFESTO

1 Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: *The Communist Manifesto*, adapted by Martin Rowson [Graphic Novel], London: SelfMadeHero (2018), pp. 13–14. Reproduced by permission of selfmadehero. Artwork © Martin Rowson.
2 Stefanie Kremmel, *Der Lebenslauf der Übersetzung. Die Transkulturalität des Kommunistischen Manifests*, Vienna: University of Vienna (2022), p. 325. © Stefanie Kremmel.
3 [Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels:] *The Communist Manifesto*, published by the International Workingmen's Association, New York: Schaerr & Frantz (1883), pp. 30, p.3–4. Reproduction by Biblioteca Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milan.

MATERIAL FOR AGITATION

1 *Gegen Young-Plan, Massenelend und Faschismus: Für ein freies, sozialistisches Deutschland (Richtlinien für den Wahlkampf 1930)* (= Instruktionen für die Wahlarbeit), Heft 1, Zentralkomitee der KPD: Berlin (1930), frontmatter.

2 *Rote Fahne* (1 May 1920), Berlin: Zeitungsinformationssystem, Staatsbibliothek Berlin, p. 2. Online: https://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/list/title/zdb/24352111/.

MASS VIOLENCE IN PAMPHLETS

1 2014 propaganda poster urging Crimeans to vote in the Crimean status referendum. Source: Andrew Lubimov, AP images.
2 Eugène Atget, *Rue de la Montagne – Sainte Geneviève*, Paris (n.d.). Source: ImageZeno.org, ID-no. 20001850032, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=64881668.
3 Unknown, propaganda poster (1944), Digital Center, Institute for Contemporary History Belgrade.
4 Unknown, Serbian anti-NATO poster, https://www.reddit.com/r/Hasan_Piker/comments/17slihf/nato_serbian_antinato_poster_1990s/.
5 Juliane Prade-Weiss, Mural in front of bombarded Serbian state TV headquarters, Belgrade (15 August 2021). © Juliane Prade-Weiss.
6 Juliane Prade-Weiss, Monument commemorating the death of employees during a 1999 NATO air raid (15 August 2021). © Juliane Prade-Weiss.
7 Unknown, *Querdenker* protesting anti-COVID-19 policies. © picture alliance / SULUPRESS.

IDA WELLS'S PRINT ACTIVISM

1 Miss Ida B. Wells: *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law In All Its Phases*, New York: The New York Age Print (1892), cover, in: Ida B. Wells, *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusader*, ed. by Mia Bay, New York: Penguin (2014), p. 57.