



Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery

Doveanna S. Fulton

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Analyzes Black women's rhetorical strategies in both autobiographical and fictional narratives of slavery.

In *Speaking Power*, Doveanna S. Fulton explores and analyzes the use of oral traditions in African American women's autobiographical and fictional narratives of slavery. African American women have consistently employed oral traditions not only to relate the pain and degradation of slavery, but also to celebrate the subversions, struggles, and triumphs of Black experience. Fulton examines orality as a rhetorical strategy, its role in passing on family and personal history, and its ability to empower, subvert oppression, assert agency, and create representations for the past. In addition to taking an insightful look at obscure or little-studied slave narratives like *Louisa Picquet, the Octoroon* and the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, Fulton also brings a fresh perspective to more familiar works, such as Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*, and highlights Black feminist orality in such works as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*.

"...an ambitious project that carves out new territory in the study of women's writings about slavery, both the personal narratives produced during slavery and the imaginative works written after emancipation." — *South Atlantic Review*

"*Speaking Power* is a rich contribution to black literary criticism. Fulton ... brings fresh insights to familiar works and offers a brilliant analysis of the interplay between speech acts and strategic silences in the narratives of African American women." — *The Journal of African American History*

"...indisputably an important book that can and should influence our reconsideration of black women's ever-resilient orality, sung and written across centuries of oppression." — *Biography*

"...brings many valuable scholarly conversations together in a single text. By examining aspects of folklore in ex-slave fiction and nonfiction narrative traditions, she describes the power and forms of counter-memory in response to the 'master' narrative of history in African-American feminist oral language use." — *JAC*

"...*Speaking Power* makes a significant contribution to conversations about pivotal connections between oral and written forms in black women's narratives of slavery, from its beginnings to the present day." — *MELUS*

"In this book, Fulton provides an engaging and pedagogically commanding investigation of the interconnection between Black women's oral agency and literary representation. Her study documents and celebrates the oral continuum that describes the merger of African American folk and literary cultures. *Speaking Power* emerges as a point of reference for nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century African American literary analysis." — Joyce A. Joyce, author of *Black Studies as Human Studies: Critical Essays and Interviews*

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