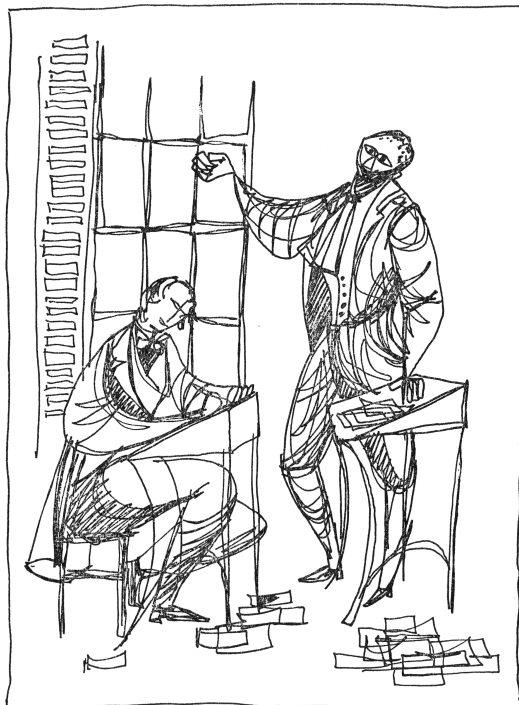


What, after all, does it mean for a black man, who has been enslaved for his entire life, to be a “North Carolina patriot” and a cultural critic of literary consumption? Horton’s patriotism is, in one sense, a means of establishing common ground with his white readers. After demonstrating his loyalty to the cultural nationalist position, Horton reduces the threat of subversion and agitation that is constituted in his very ability to read and write by reassuring his reader that he is “too modest” to think that his own writing ought to be considered in this call for poetry of “native growth.” Rhetorically, we see the complex gymnastics that Horton must undergo in order to speak on behalf of American letters. As in his letter “To the Public,” Horton dons a cultural nationalist position in his homages to Andrew Jackson and Ulysses S. Grant, extolling the accomplishments

NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE POLITICAL HOMAGES OF GEORGE MOSES HORTON BY JUSTIN WILLIAMS



dictating poems to a student

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of domestic American martial figures. Presenting these figures as national heroes, in these poems, Horton, simultaneously reflects, perpetuates, and shapes popular narratives about them. In these poems, too, Horton makes tacit appeals for membership in a national consciousness that has, since birth, denied him the possibility of citizenship.

“IN THESE POEMS, HORTON, PRESENTING THESE FIGURES AS NATIONAL HEROES, SIMULTANEOUSLY REFLECTS, PERPETUATES, AND SHAPES POPULAR NARRATIVES ABOUT THEM.”

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